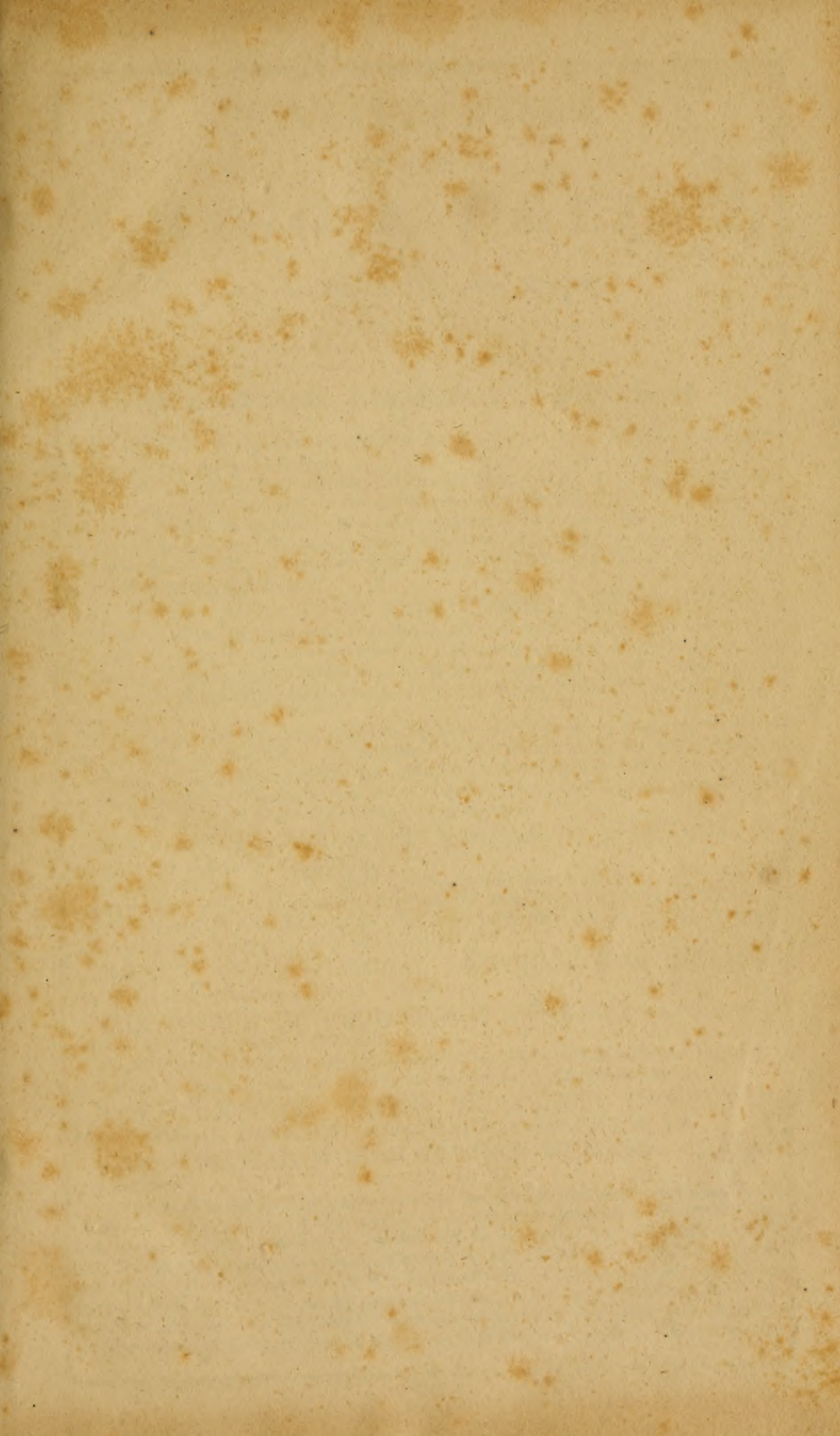


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SERMON I.

THE CONVERSION OF THE JAILER.

Acts xvi. 30, 31. Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

THE question I have read to you was asked by the Jailer at Philippi, and the answer was given by Paul and Silas. The case was this: Paul and Silas were taken up for preaching the gospel, and brought before the rulers. The rulers unjustly caused them to be severely whipped, and then "cast them into prison, charging the Jailer to keep them safely; who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks."

But these good men were not unhappy; their Master was with them, according to his gracious promise, and filled their hearts with joy; so that, even at midnight, they could not refrain from singing praises to God; and their fellow-prisoners, in other dungeons, heard them with surprise.

Just then, that God might show his regard to them, and his anger against their persecutors, there was, all on a sudden, a very great and awful earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken by it. At the same time, all the doors flew open; and all the bands and fetters that were on them, and the rest of the prisoners, dropped off at once.

The keeper of the jail, starting up from his sleep, and finding the prisoners at liberty, was so terrified lest he should be charged with a breach of trust in letting them escape, that he drew his sword, and was going to stab himself.

But Paul, knowing his wicked design, and moved with pity for him, though he had used them so ill, cried out aloud, "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here." The Jailer, calling for a light, ran with all speed into the inner prison; and being full of horror at such an appearance of God in favor of his servants, and, at the same time, struck by the Holy Spirit with a deep conviction of his own guilt and danger, he threw himself on the ground before them, and asked their direction for the relief of his soul, in the words of our text: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" A more important question was never asked. It be-

comes every one to make the inquiry; and if any one of you have never before seriously made it, God grant you may do so now! The answer given, and the only proper answer that could be given, was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." May the Lord assist us, while we consider these two parts of the text!

I. *An important question.*

II. *A gospel answer.*

I. *The question.* It is in few words, but they are full of meaning. Let us examine it. And I shall consider it, first,

As the language of conviction. By conviction, I mean the work of the Holy Spirit on the mind of a sinner, whereby he is convinced that he is a sinner, and is properly affected with it. Without this, people try to excuse or lessen their sins. Some lay the blame of their sin upon others, as Adam did upon Eve, and as Eve did upon the serpent. People in general think very little, and very lightly of their sin. Some even make a mock at sin, and glory in it. This is a sad state to be in. Such persons are very far from God, and have no religion at all, whatever they may pretend to have. Such were the Pharisees, who were thought to be very religious; but they generally despised and opposed Jesus Christ; for, as he told them, "the whole need not a physician, but those who are sick."

But it is a good thing to be sensible of our sin. It is the first work of God upon the soul to make us so. For this purpose we must consider the holy law of God contained in the Ten Commandments. "By the law is the knowledge of sin;" and, "Sin is the transgression of the law." Thus St. Paul himself came to see he was a sinner, as he tells us, Rom. vii. 9. "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." If ever we have broken the law, even once in our lives, we are sinners; for as it is written, Gal. iii. 10. "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, written in the book of the law, to do them." Now, *who* is there, that can pretend to say, he never sinned in all his life? Do you not often at public prayers, say, you are miserable sinners? But it is one thing to say so, merely in a customary way; and another, to be seriously convinced of it, and deeply affected with it.

The Holy Spirit not only brings us to admit, what we can hardly deny, that we have sinned; but he also shows us, that we have sinned much and often; that we have sinned in our hearts thousands of times, when we have not seemed to others to sin.

He also shows us the very great *evil* there is in sin. He shows us what abominable *ingratitude* there is in it; for 'God has nourished us, and brought us up as children, and we have rebelled against him.' He shows what a *base* and *filthy* thing sin is; that it makes us hateful and abominable in his sight, viler than the brutes that perish. And he also shows us the *danger* there is in sin. "The wages of sin is death." Sin brought all our miseries into the world. It is owing to sin that we must all die, and return to dust; and, what is worse, sin exposes us to the wrath of God and the flames of hell for ever. Now the Jailer saw all this, and therefore cried out, "What must I do to be saved?" And this leads me next to observe, that

This question bespeaks Fear. Yes, my brethren, it is the language of fear: it is the language of terror and consternation. Whenever we are alarmed at the approach of some dreadful evil, it is natural to cry, what shall I do? And have not sinners much to fear? Is it not "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God?" O! consider who he is that we have provoked by our sins. It is the great, the Almighty God, who made the world with a word, and can crush it in a moment. It is "the Lord, who hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned, at his presence. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide the fierceness of his anger?" Nahum i. 3—6. This is that dreadful God, who hath said, "that the wicked shall be turned into hell, with all who forget him." Shall we not fear him then? shall we not tremble at his presence? "Yea," saith the Lord, "I say unto you, fear him who can not only kill the body, but cast both body and soul into hell." O! how would you shudder to see a fellow-creature burning at a stake! how would you wish that death would speedily end his pain! But how would you feel, to see him burn a whole hour, a whole day, a whole week, and all the time filling the air with horrid shrieks, and crying in vain for ease or death? Horrid as this would be, it gives but a faint idea of hell; that dreadful place

of torment, "where the worm dieth not, and where the fire is not quenched." It was the dread of this that made the Jailer cry, "What must I do to be saved?" And it was well for him, that he foresaw the evil, and found a refuge from it. God grant we may all do the same. But there is more in the question.

It is also the language of *Desire*; earnest, ardent, desire. The natural man desires only carnal things. What shall I eat, what shall I drink, what shall I wear? How may I be rich, and happy, and respected? or, as the Psalmist expresses it, "Who will show me any good?" any worldly good, any temporary good. But "that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." The awakened soul has new desires; or, rather, all his desires are brought into one, and that one is salvation. "What shall I do to be saved? to be delivered from the wrath to come; to have my sins pardoned; to be restored to the divine favor?" This is now "the one thing needful." Without this, all other things are of no value; they are less than nothing, and vanity, compared with salvation. This earnest desire will soon be expressed in prayer. For the sinner knows that salvation can come only from God; and, as it was remarked by Christ himself, concerning Saul when converted, "Behold, he prayeth!" so it will always be found, that the desire of the new-born soul will vent itself in prayer. Those who live without prayer, are strangers to this desire, and are totally destitute of religion.

The question in our text is likewise the language of *Hope*. I do not mean a lively and believing hope, founded upon the gospel, but a feeble, wavering hope, arising from a general notion of the mercy of God. For there is in the minds of all mankind, some notion that God is merciful, and may possibly pardon; and though this is too often abused, and people encourage themselves by it to go on in sin, yet it is of great service to convince sinners, and keeps them from despair, till the Spirit of God leads them by the gospel to know that there is indeed forgiveness with him, and that the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin. Therefore the poor Jailer, though a blind Heathen, does not say, "There is no mercy for me; I am such a sinner I never can be saved." But his question seems to say, as the repenting Ninevites said, on the preaching of Jonah, "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?" Jonah iii. 9.

Once more, we may observe, that the

Jailer's question includes a *Confession of his Ignorance*. He wanted to be saved, but he knew not *how*; nor can any man know this aright till he is taught of God. It is the true character of natural men, as mentioned Rom. iii. 17. that "the way of peace they have not known." By the fall of man, in Adam, "darkness has covered the earth, and gross darkness the people." And this is the state, not only of the blind Heathens, who have not the Bible, but of a great many called Christians. How many are there, among *us* who are entirely ignorant of the way in which poor sinners are saved by Jesus Christ! But, to remove this fatal darkness, Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, hath arisen upon the earth. He is the light of the world; and he has commanded his ministers to "preach the gospel to every creature." Paul and Silas were so employed before they were cast into prison. It had been declared in the city concerning them—"These men are the servants of the most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation," ver. 17. As soon, therefore, as the Jailer was convinced of his need of salvation, and his ignorance, he earnestly desires to be taught by them. He no longer reviles and abuses these ministers of Christ, but applies to them for instruction. And thus it will be with all who are truly serious. They will not mock at preachers of the gospel, but rather "Stand in the way, and see, and ask for the old paths; where is the good way, that they may walk therein, and find rest for their souls," Jer. vi. 16. And now say, my friends, whether you have ever felt in your minds this earnest desire to know the way of God more perfectly? For this end, do you bow your knees to God in prayer? Do you read your Bible for this purpose? And with this view do you go to hear the ministers of Christ? Be assured, this is the pursuit of all who are under divine influence.

This question is also the language of *Legality*. By legality, I mean cleaving to the law; or "going about to establish our own righteousness" by the deeds of the law, or our good works. When God made man at first, he made a covenant of works with him. If he obeyed the will of God perfectly, he was to live; but if he failed in a single instance, he was to die. He did fail, and therefore could never attain life by his own righteousness. God was pleased to save him by grace, and not by works. In like manner, the Scripture assures us, that by grace alone we are saved through faith, and not by any works

of righteousness which we have done. But till we are taught of God, we are all apt to think that we can save ourselves, wholly or partly, by our own doings. The poor Jailer was of this mind, and therefore asks, "What must I *do* to be saved?" He thought it must be by *doing* something that we must obtain the pardon of our sins and eternal life; but he was soon better informed by the ministers of the gospel.

Finally, I consider this question as the language of *Submission*. Poor man! his heart was alarmed with fear, and humbled for sin. He saw nothing but eternal destruction before him, and would give all the world to avoid it: and therefore he cries, What shall I do? As if he had said, Show me my duty, and let it be ever so hard and difficult, I am ready to do it. I would go through fire or water, so that my precious soul may be saved. And is it so with *you*? Are you willing to part with your sins? Depend upon it you are not in the way to salvation till you are willing to part with all for Christ: and if you are, how gladly will you hear the true way to salvation, as declared by these inspired servants of our Lord. This is contained in the second part of our subject; or,

II. *The gospel answer*, given to the Jailer's question. This short and plain answer is the only true one that can be given to the important inquiry; and it is of vast importance that a convinced soul be led in the right way. I am afraid that some men, some ministers, would not have given this answer, *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ*. I am afraid, that if a person, under that sense of sin which I have described, were to go to an ungodly minister, and say, O sir, what must I do to be saved? he would give different advice. He would say, "I hope you have done nothing very bad. You have not killed anybody. You have not robbed anybody. You are no worse than your neighbors. I would have you lay aside such gloomy notions. Go into company, and be amused. Continue to do your duty, and you need not fear. But be sure you do not go among the Fanatics; they will drive you mad." But you may learn from the text, that it is no madness to be concerned for the salvation of our souls, nor to be earnest in learning how we must be saved. The Jailer never acted a more rational part, nor asked a wiser question, than in this instance. *They* are the madmen, who sell their souls for the short-lived pleasures of sin. You may also learn from this passage, *who* are the true ministers of Christ; they are those who preach him, and direct you to flee to

him for salvation. Now all these, with one accord, in all countries, and of all parties, will unite and say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

And here you may observe how false that notion is, which some people maintain of zealous ministers, namely, that they preach nothing but damnation; whereas the subject of what we preach is *salvation*. If we say any thing of damnation, it is that you may avoid it, and flee to Christ, as the Deliverer from it. There is no need for the vilest sinner to despair. St. Paul says to the Jailer, though he had been a very bad man, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." The gospel is *good news*, my friends; it publishes a free, full, everlasting salvation to the chief of sinners.

Observe, *Who it is* that St. Paul recommends to the notice of this distressed man. It is the LORD JESUS CHRIST. It is the LORD. The maker of heaven and earth, Col. i. 16;—"the Lord of all," Acts x. 30, who came down from heaven. The "Son of God," who became "the Son of Man," that we, the children of men, might become the children of God. His name is called JESUS, which signifies a *Savior*, and he was so called, because "he came to save us from our sins," Matt. i. 21. Yet, "this is, indeed, a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus came into the world to save sinners." He is also called CHRIST, or the Messiah, long promised, and long expected by the Jews; and it signifies the *Anointed*, which implies, that he was every way qualified for the work of salvation, and appointed to it. This then is the glorious person, to whom a sinner is directed to look for salvation. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. He exhorts him to *believe*. What is to believe on him? I answer, it is to believe all that God says in the gospel concerning him, so as to look to him alone for salvation. Faith is explained by *coming to Christ*; it is the application of the mind to him for relief. It is called *receiving Christ*; the soul accepts him as held forth in the gospel, in all his saving characters and offices. It is a *committing the soul* to him, knowing there is salvation in him, and in no other, and humbly relying on his love and faithfulness to preserve it unto eternal salvation. But the nature of faith is more fully considered in another Sermon.

Observe, further, the comfortable assurance that is here given to the distressed Jailer. *Thou shalt be saved*. Salvation was what he longed for. He wanted to know the way of it. He is directed to Je-

sus as the Savior, and to believe on him, as the way of being saved by him; and in so doing, he is assured that salvation shall be his. Blessed be God for many precious promises to this purpose in his word. Hear what Jesus Christ himself saith, John iii. 36, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." And in another place, John vi. 40, "This is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life."

APPLICATION.

And now, my friends, let me ask you, Are you concerned about your souls? Were you ever brought, like the Jailer, to ask, with seriousness, with earnestness of soul, what must I do to be saved? Are you not a sinner? Are you not a dying sinner? Must you not soon appear before your Judge? What, then, will you plead? Are you ready for the solemn trial? O consider these things! trifle no longer with your souls! Eternity is at hand, heaven or hell will soon be your portion. And can you be unconcerned? Be assured, that serious-consideration and deep conviction are absolutely necessary. There is no real religion without these. If you never felt a concern for the salvation of your soul—if you never felt a desire to know how you must be saved, you are yet a stranger to any true religion. You are a Christian only in name. You are far from God, and in a most dangerous condition. O then look up to God for the teaching of his Spirit; beg him to take away your heart of stone, and to make you truly desirous of his salvation.

If you are concerned about your soul, which way do you look for help? If you would be saved, what course do you take? Do you say, "I must repent and reform?" It is true; so you must. But do you think that repentance, or reformation, is sufficient to save your soul? No, Jesus is the only Savior. The apostles directed sinners to believe in him. That is your first business. Pray for faith. It is the gift of God; and he will give it you, if ye will ask him. And if you truly believe, repentance and reformation will surely follow, together with all good works, by which a true faith is as certainly known as a tree is discerned by its fruits. How soon did the Jailer prove the truth of his faith in this manner? He showed the utmost readiness to hear the gospel preached by the ministers of Christ; and he joined to works of piety, those of charity; "he took Paul and Silas, the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes;" he also took

upon himself the full profession of this new and despised religion, by being baptized, and so separating himself from all his heathen neighbors. Then let us immediately separate ourselves from the vain world, and boldly confess to whom we belong; while we show the strongest affection to the ministers and people of God.

PRAYER.—Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty! Thou lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity; and thou hast said The soul which sinneth shall die. We confess, O Lord, that we have sinned and done evil in thy sight! We have erred and strayed from thy ways, like lost sheep; and if thou, Lord, shouldst mark our iniquities, and deal with us according to our sins, we can never stand in the judgment; but must be consigned to the dreadful punishment which our sins have deserved!

May each of us seriously inquire, as the awakened Jailer did, What shall I do to be saved? May we sincerely desire to be saved from our sins—from the guilt of them, that we may not be punished; and from the power of them, that they may not have dominion over us.

We bless thee, O God, for thy holy and blessed Gospel, which directs us to Christ, the all-sufficient Savior! Thou hast been pleased to make him known to us, as able to save to the uttermost, all who come to thee by him. We desire to come to thee through him. Help us to believe in him to the saving of our souls! Enable us cordially to receive thy testimony concerning him, and to rely upon him alone for salvation! O give us thy holy Spirit to work this faith in our hearts, that so we may have joy and peace in believing, and bring forth all the fruits of good living, which are to thy glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON II.

THE BROAD AND THE NARROW WAY.

Matt. xii. 13, 14. Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

It is with great propriety that human life is compared to a journey, and every man to a traveller; for life is very short, and the present state is not our final rest, but only preparatory to it. Every man has some particular point at which he aims, and is daily travelling either to heaven or hell.

These words must have great weight with all who reverence the name and authority of Jesus Christ; for they are his words, and they contain matter of eternal importance to us all. They consist of a short exhortation—"Enter ye in at the strait gate;" and a very important reason for preferring that to the wide gate: for the wide gate leads to destruction, but the

narrow one to eternal life. In discoursing on the text, let us consider,

I. The wide gate, and the broad way, with the end of it.

II. The strait gate, and the narrow way, with what it leads to. And,

III. Enforce the exhortation—"Enter ye in at the strait gate."

And now, O Thou that beholdest the evil and the good; Thou who knowest every heart, and seest which of these ways we are in, make the word useful to us all, and incline poor sinners to choose the narrow way, that so they may find everlasting life!

I. We are to consider the wide gate, and the broad way. And what is this but sin? If there is a way to hell, sin is certainly that way, for "the wages of sin is death;" but let such persons remember, that "what a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "If we live after the flesh, we shall die," Rom. vi. 23. But, to be more particular, this broad way includes, *a thoughtless mind, a carnal heart, and a wicked life.*

1. A thoughtless mind. And O how common this is! How many live as thoughtless about their souls, as if they had none. They think no more of God, and Christ, and salvation, than if they were incapable of thinking; they are like the beasts that perish. Although the great end of our being is, to know, serve, and glorify God; yet this is wholly lost sight of and forgotten. Although the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and the care of the soul is the one thing needful; yet thousands, even in this Christian country, live like Atheists, and God is not in all their thoughts. O prodigious and lamentable stupidity! Awake, O sleeper, arise, and call upon thy God, lest thou perish! Where is thy conscience? What says death? Is it not approaching? O rouse yourselves from this dangerous lethargy, and think what you are, and where you are going. Some of you may be free from the grosser vices, not chargeable, perhaps, with profaneness or drunkenness: yet know, that if living in ease and security, without any care about your soul and eternity, you are, equally with the vilest characters, in the broad road to destruction.

Again, *The carnal or filthy heart* is included; so the Holy Ghost describes the heart of man in its natural and depraved state. The immortal mind of man, originally created in the image of God, and formed for spiritual exercises, is now, by the fall of Adam, become carnal. So St.

Paul speaks in the 8th of Romans, verse the 5th, "They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." The carnal man is all for the world. His cares, his hopes, his fears, his desires, his pleasures, his pains, his conversation, is all about the world. His fleshly mind is crowded with worldly thoughts, and, as it was at Bethlehem, there is no room for Christ in the inn. But let it be observed, that whoever is in this case is in the broad road; for the Scripture declares, that "they that are in the flesh cannot please God," and that this "carnal mind is enmity against God." This is the miserable condition of many, who pass for moral, industrious, good sort of people; but they are far from God;—they are "sensual, not having the Spirit;" and minding only earthly things, their end is destruction. Phil. iii. 19.

Once more, observe, that the broad way includes—a *wicked life*. A life of sin. Whoever lives in wilful disobedience to the commands of God, is assuredly in the road to destruction. Let none deceive themselves with vain words and idle excuses. "He that committeth sin is of the devil," 1 John iii. 8. "Know ye not," saith the Apostle Paul, "that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, shall inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. God will not hold him guiltless, who taketh his name in vain; nor will the sabbath-breaker escape unpunished. How is it then that poor sinners flatter themselves with hopes of salvation? "for these things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience," Eph. v. 6.

To these destructive sins another may be added, which is more destructive than them all; namely, the sin of unbelief. Though a person should be free from many of the sins just mentioned, yet unbelief would be like a millstone about his neck, and sink him for ever in the gulf of perdition. God having, in his rich mercy to mankind, sent his Son to be a Savior, and sent his gospel to publish this in our ears, nothing can be more displeasing to him than to "neglect his great salvation," or "refuse him who speaketh from heaven." Our blessed Savior, while he mercifully promises, that, "he who believeth shall be saved;" solemnly declares, that, "he who believeth not shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16.

This, then, is the wide gate and the

broad way—namely, a thoughtless mind—a carnal heart—and a wicked life; all which, by unbelief, which refuses the only method of salvation, lead to certain and everlasting ruin.

But you will ask, Why are these things so described? Why are they compared to a wide gate and a broad way? The reason is plain; for as it is easy to go through a wide gate and walk in a broad road, so the sinner finds no hindrance to his entering on a life of sin, and little or no difficulty in pursuing it.

Our corrupt nature strongly inclines us to sin. David says, "We are conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity," Psalm li. 5.; and that "the wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." You know that children need no teacher to make them wicked. Sin is in our very nature, and we walk in this road of our own accord; it is natural and pleasant to us: while we as naturally dislike the narrow road, and despise those who walk in it.

Besides, those who are in the broad road meet with no hindrances from the world or from the devil. The broad way is the way of the world; for, as the Apostle John saith, "The whole world lieth in wickedness," except the happy few who are delivered from it by the grace of God. In this broad way all ranks of men may be seen, from kings and princes, down to slaves and beggars. Now it is easy to walk in a broad road with a multitude, provided they are all going one way, which is the case here; and the world will love its own. In this road, persons feel the great force of example, and plead, you know, for what they do, by the commonness of it, or its being the way of the world. They are afraid of appearing singular, even though conscience sometimes remonstrates against their evil courses. The pleasures of sin entice them to go forward, notwithstanding every warning of their danger; and the hopes of gain, and the favor of mankind, seduce them; for these they are afraid of losing, if they become religious.

This road is wide and easy, because the devil gives no disturbance to them that walk in it. While "the strong man armed keeps the house, the goods are in peace." He strongly opposes the people of God who are in the narrow way; he disputes every inch of ground with them; but he is in league with these; he endeavors to keep them from all fear of consequences; he blinds their minds, lest the light of the gospel should shine into them

and he fills their hearts with prejudices against faithful preachers, who would point out their sin and danger: Yea, he takes the same course with them as he did with our first mother; when he tempted her to eat the forbidden fruit. God had said, "If ye eat it, ye shall surely die;" but this father of lies directly contradicts the threatening, and induces her to eat, by saying, "Ye shall not surely die." So in this case our Savior plainly declares, that the broad road of sin leads to destruction; but Satan deceives poor sinners, and prevails upon them to believe, that, though they live in sin and unbelief, they shall not experience the destruction threatened.

But who will you believe—the God of truth, or the father of lies? Observe the text: "The broad road leads to destruction;" and O think what that destruction is. Think what "a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God." Think, O think, of "the worm that never dies, and the fire that is never quenched." What would you not do to prevent the destruction of your property, the destruction of your dear relations, the destruction of your life? But what are all these to your soul, your immortal soul? "For what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Well then, would you avoid this destruction, and surely you would, this broad road must be forsaken; and, blessed be God, that it is not yet too late to forsake it; and you must enter into the narrow way, by the strait gate mentioned in the text. Let us therefore, in the second place,

II. Consider what is meant by the strait gate, and the narrow way, and what it leads to.

The design of these expressions is to show, that the entrance into a religious course of life is painful and difficult, and that tribulation is to be expected in our progress. We may include the whole in three words, REPENTANCE, FAITH, and HOLINESS; a little examination of these particulars will prove the propriety of the phrases in the text.

John the Baptist, our Savior, and his Apostles, all went out and preached REPENTANCE; and without this we are assured men must perish. Now repentance cannot but be painful, for it consists chiefly in a godly sorrow for sin, together with a firm resolution to forsake it at all events, and whatever it may cost us. The penitent sinner, being convinced that he has sinned, and come short of the glory of God; that he has by sin destroyed himself, and be-

come liable to the dreadful wrath of God, perceives that he has all his life been acting a most foolish and hurtful part; but that he must now forsake all his sins, though dear to him as his right eye, and useful to him as his right hand. Now all this appears to a natural man irksome and unpleasant. He is unwilling to think seriously of his sins and of their fatal consequences, and still more unwilling to part with them. He therefore shuns this, as a man would avoid passing through a very strait and low door, when a spacious one offered itself at the same time.

FAITH is also intended by the narrow way. "By grace are we saved through faith," and "without faith it is impossible to please God." True faith consists in so believing the gospel of Jesus Christ, as to take him for our only Savior; utterly renouncing all dependence on our own works and righteousness; submitting to be saved by the mere favor of God in Christ, as a poor beggar is relieved by an alms. Jesus Christ is, himself, the way. "I, saith he, (John xiv. 6.) am the way;—no man cometh to the Father but by me;" and it is by faith that we walk in this way; for all true Christians live by faith, and walk with God by faith.

Now this way of living, renouncing all our own works, in point of dependence, and accounting them, in that respect, as "dung and dross, that we may win Christ;" this way is so contrary to our natural inclinations, and so humbling to a self-righteous spirit, that it may well be called a narrow way. There are thousands who are so proud of their good hearts and their good works, that they scorn to be indebted to Christ for his righteousness. They think themselves rich, and increased with goods, and that they stand in need of nothing, while, in fact, they are poor, wretched, miserable, blind, and naked, Rev. iii. 18. The boasting Pharisee, whom we read of in the gospel, was so swollen with the pride of his duties and works, that he could not enter in at the strait gate; but the poor Publican, who saw and felt himself a sinner, stooping low before God, entered it, crying out, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

The way of holiness is also a narrow way. Holiness consists in the conformity of our will to the will of God; it is produced by the power of the Holy Spirit in the regeneration of a sinner. The law of God is written on his heart; whereby he is disposed to resist temptation, to forsake sin, and to practise obedience to the commands of God. In doing this, we must

deny ourselves, take up our cross daily, and follow Christ. We must mortify the flesh, with its affections and lusts. We must crucify the old man of sin, and walk, not according to the course of the world, nor according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. Now, in doing this, we cannot but meet with difficulties. We shall meet with continual opposition from our own corruptions, the law in our members warring against the law of our minds. We shall also suffer reproach and contempt from the world; for all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. And besides all this, God our heavenly Father sees it necessary to chastise us with the rod of affliction, of which all his children are partakers, for spiritual good.

Considering therefore the nature of Repentance, Faith, and Holiness, we clearly see how properly a true Christian may be said to enter upon a religious life by a strait gate, and to proceed in it by a narrow way.

But here, perhaps, an objection may be started. Does not our Lord say,—“Take my yoke upon you, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light?” Does not Solomon say, “The ways of wisdom are pleasantness, and her paths peace?” And does not St. John say, that “Christ’s commands are not grievous?” How then is it true, that the gate is strait, and the way narrow?

I answer, the ways of religion are perfectly easy and pleasant in their own nature; the difficulty arises from the depravity and corruption of our nature. Angels do the will of God with perfect ease and pleasure, for they have no sin in their nature to oppose it. But through the power of sin in our hearts, the entrance into religion becomes painful and difficult, and through the remains of it in regenerate persons, more or less of that difficulty is found in the whole journey. Yet grace renders it practicable, and often pleasant; so that no believer repents of his choice, nor wishes to turn back because of the hardships he endures; but, like Moses of old, “chooses rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt”—and for the same good reason—having “respect to the recompense of reward.” And this leads us to the last particular, namely.

III. To enforce the exhortation, “Enter ye in at the strait gate.”

O how wise, how gracious, how reasonable, is this advice! May God dispose all our hearts to obey it! There are but

two ways that we can travel; the one leads to eternal misery; the other to eternal bliss! and that we may not miss our way, the blessed Jesus clearly marks out the right one, so that we cannot mistake—the gate is strait, the way is narrow, and there are few travellers in it. It is true, there are difficulties in the way, but heaven will make amends for all. Heaven is worth every thing, or it is worth nothing. Let us not be such cowards as to be frightened at a little trouble. Nothing, even in this life, can be attained without it. A child cannot learn to read without difficulty. A boy cannot learn a trade without pains. We cannot carry on any business without care or labor. But are we therefore prevented from these things? No, we wisely consider the advantage, and act accordingly.

Neither let us be swayed by numbers. “Follow not a multitude to do evil.” Let us not think ourselves right, because we do as others. We must suspect ourselves if we do. The broad road is thronged with travellers; but the narrow has only a pilgrim here and there. And this should keep us from being ashamed of singularity in a good cause. Christ here teaches us to expect that religion will have few advocates comparatively. God grant that we, however, may be of that happy number!

Well then, let us, by divine grace, resolve on eternal life at all events. On the one hand, here is a broad road, full of passengers, in which, it is true, the poor, paltry, perishing, intoxicating pleasure of sin may be enjoyed for a moment, though not without a pang; and at the end of this short discourse is—O tremble, my soul, at the thought—*Destruction!*—not ceasing to be, but an utter end of all pleasure for evermore. Misery, pains, torments, without mitigation, without cessation, without end. Everlasting separation from the presence of God, the fountain of life; and confinement in chains of darkness with devils and damned spirits, to all eternity.

On the other hand, God has set before us the way of life. The entrance is strait, the way is narrow. Difficulties indeed there are; but grace lessens them all, and sweetens them all; so that the worst of Christ’s way is better than the best of Satan’s way; and, what is best of all, the end is eternal life. And O, what tongue can tell, what heart conceive, what God has laid up for them that love him! Is there a redeemed soul in glory, who now repents of the pains he took in religion? Does he repent of his repentance? Does he regret that he believed in the Son of God? Is he

sorry that he walked in the way of holiness? O no. Each glorified saint reviews with ecstasy of joy, the rich grace of God, that enabled him to discover the danger of that broad road in which he once travelled, and that placed his feet in the narrow but sure and safe road to eternal bliss.

Obey then the words of our Lord in another place, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate."—Agonize to do it. Do it at all events. Do it directly. Let not a moment be lost. "Escape for your lives; look not behind you; neither tarry ye in all the plain: escape to the mountain, lest ye be consumed." Fly from the wrath to come. "For many shall seek to enter in and shall not be able." (Luke xiii. 24.) Many, who would willingly go to heaven, seek after it in so cold and slothful a manner, or by such false and mistaken ways, that they never obtain it; and O how many, who now neglect it altogether, will knock for admittance when the door is shut! Now, therefore, while it is called to-day, let us hear his voice. Let us be diligent in observing the sabbath, attending on the preached word as often as possible, reading the scriptures daily; and especially, let us wrestle hard with God in prayer, that he would give us his Spirit, to teach and assist us, and work in our hearts that deep repentance, that true faith, and that genuine holiness, which are the proper exercises of all who travel in the narrow way to heaven.

The almost Christian and Apostate.

BROAD is the road that leads to death,
And thousands walk together there;
But wisdom shows a narrower path,
With here and there a traveller.
"Deny thyself, and take thy cross,"
Is the Redeemer's great command!
Nature must count her gold but dross,
If she would gain the heav'nly land.
The fearful soul that tires and faints,
And walks the ways of God no more,
Is but esteemed almost a saint,
And makes his own destruction sure.
Lord, let not all my hopes be vain;
Create my heart entirely new,
Which hypocrites could ne'er attain;
Which false apostates never knew.

PRAYER.—ALMIGHTY GOD! thou hast now set before us life and death,—blessing and cursing! We have heard from our Savior's lips that there are only two ways in which we can walk. The broad way of Carelessness, Carnality, and Sin, which certainly leads to endless ruin; and the narrow way of Repentance, Faith, and Holiness, which leads to eternal life. Grant, O most merciful God, that we may immediately resolve, by thy grace, which we now heartily implore, to forsake the broad way, however difficult we may

find it so to do! Suffer us not to proceed in it another step; but may we determine, at all events, and without a moment's delay, to strive to enter in at the strait gate. May we do this, whatever it may cost us!—although the world, the flesh, and the devil, may oppose us, yet enable us to escape for our lives, and flee for refuge to the Savior, lest we be consumed! Strengthen us, O Lord, by thy Holy Spirit, that henceforth we may pursue the narrow way that leads to thee and to Heaven! O work in our hearts that genuine repentance, that true faith, and that gospel-holiness which are found in all the travellers to Sion! and this we beg for the sake of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

SERMON III.

THE NATURE, SPIRITUALITY, AND USE OF THE LAW.

Rom. vii. 9.—For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.

It is a most true maxim of scripture, that, "The whole need not a physician; but those who are sick." The church of Christ has been justly compared to a hospital, to which none but the sick repair; no wonder then that the gay and healthy shun it. But whether we know it or not, our souls are sadly and dangerously diseased; and the worst symptom of all is, we know it not.

It may not be pleasant to a person to be told of any thing amiss in his health, his family, or his affairs; yet he is a true friend who gives the information, and he is a wise man who thankfully receives it. With this view, John the Baptist was sent before Christ; by preaching repentance to prepare the way for him: and the disciples of John gladly received the Savior. Without the knowledge of ourselves, as sinners, we cannot understand the gospel, nor prize Jesus. And this is the true key to what would otherwise be unaccountable—the general neglect of the great salvation. When our Lord himself and his inspired Apostles, with every possible advantage, preached the gospel, few believed the heavenly report; almost all, with one consent, began to make excuse; one going to his farm, and another to his merchandise. Now, as men are all alive to worldly pleasure and profit, it is evident, that their neglect arises from ignorance of their true state; and this is from their ignorance of the law of God, which is the only certain rule and standard by which to measure ourselves.

Hence, St. Paul designing in this Epistle to treat fully concerning the great point of justification, or being made righteous before God, takes care, in the first place,

to prove that all men in the world are sinners—the Gentiles against the law of nature, and the Jews against the written law, or ten commandments. He well knew the importance of this method, by his own experience; for he says in the text, “he was alive without the law once,” &c. that is, when he was unconverted, and a proud Pharisee, he had high swelling thoughts of himself; thought all was well between God and him; he did not see himself dead in the law, being justly condemned by it for his sin; but he was all alive in his own opinion; and his mistake arose from ignorance of the law. He was “without the law;” not without the letter of it; he could have said it by heart: but he did not know its spiritual meaning and high requirements. But when the commandment came, especially the tenth commandment; when it came in the light and energy of the Holy Spirit to his mind and conscience; when he saw that it reached to the thoughts, principles, views, and desires of the heart, as well as to his words and actions; requiring perfect purity, and condemning for a single sin, even in thought—then, saith he, then “sin revived, and I died.” Then he saw thousands of things to be sins, which he never thought such before; and he found sin had full power and life in him; sin revived in his conscience; he saw it in all its dreadful terror, as justly exposing him to the wrath of God; and he fell under a sense of death, and condemnation, as a man dead in law, and deserving to die eternally.

Now, that we may rightly understand the law, and that it may be “our school-master to bring us to Christ,” let us,

First, Take a view of the holy law, by which is the knowledge of sin: and,

Secondly, Consider the proper effect of a work of the law on the heart.

I. Let us take a view of the holy law of God; for hereby is the knowledge of sin.

Remember, my friends, that God, who is the maker of the world, is also the governor of it. God prefaces his law with these words, *I am Jehovah*, the self-existent Being, the source of all being, on whom all beings depend: and he adds, *I am thy God*, to remind the Jews of their relation to him; for they were his professed worshippers, as we also are. He adds, *who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage*. Here are their obligations to him on account of their wonderful deliverance; so the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ lays them under infinite obligations to holy obedience. Man is a rational being, and

accountable to God for his conduct. Brutes are led by instinct; but it is fit that man should be led by proper motives, willingly to obey his Maker’s will. Now from the first, God gave a law to man. It was not indeed written. There was no occasion for it. Men lived almost a thousand years, and could easily teach their children what God at first taught Adam. At length, however, God saw fit to give his law from Mount Sinai, in dreadful thunders; and also to write it on two tables of stone.

You will observe, that the law of God is summed up in one word, namely, *LOVE*; and that this love has two objects: *Love to God*, for what he is in himself, and for the blessings he gives us; and love to man, for God’s sake.

The love we owe to God is to be expressed in four ways; and these are set forth in the first four commandments.

The *first* commandment is, *Thou shalt have no other gods but me*. This requires us to know and confess the true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as the only living God, and our God; in opposition to all idolatry; it requires us also to love and adore him, as the author of our being, and the source of our happiness; and this commandment is broken, not only by worshipping other gods, but by setting our idols in our hearts, by excessive self-love, or love of creatures, relations, money, or gratifications of the flesh; so that, according to this, there are many Atheists, living without God in the world, and many idolaters, worshipping the creature.

The *second* commandment forbids all worship of Images; and requires us to worship God in the way he has appointed; but, alas! how many wholly neglect and despise his worship! How many worship God with various superstitions and inventions of men! How many others forget that God is a Spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and truth! What levity and folly do many mix with their pretended devotions. But in vain do we thus mock God, and play the hypocrite, drawing nigh to him with the lips, when our hearts are far from him. The reason added to this commandment, *for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God*, &c. shows how extremely displeasing it is to him to neglect his worship, or worship him in an improper manner, and that he will resent this sin not only to the persons who commit it, but to their posterity.

The *third* commandment forbids the taking the Lord’s name in vain. But, O! how awful is the common practice of cursing and swearing! We may truly

say, "Because of swearing the land mourneth;" the breath of some men is nothing but blasphemy; "their throat is an open sepulchre;" the stench of their profaneness is infinitely worse than that of a stinking carcass; and many, who do not use the most horrid oaths, will cry out—O Lord! O God! O Christ! God bless us! Lord have mercy! &c. &c. But, however common this practice is, let all men know, that God declares "he will not hold them guiltless that take his name in vain." O consider what a great God we have to do with; and let his name never be mentioned without a serious pause, allowing us time to think who he is, and that he is greatly to be feared.

The *fourth* commandment respects the religious observation of the Lord's Day, or Christian Sabbath. We can never enough admire the goodness of God in the appointment of it. Persons should prepare for it, by having every thing in readiness as much as possible, that no part of it, especially the morning, which is the best part of it, should be lost. All unnecessary works are to be laid aside: no journeys, no visits, no settling accounts, writing letters, nor paying and receiving wages. The whole day, from morning to night, should be spent in acts of religious worship, public and private, except so much as must be employed in works of necessity and mercy.

O! how awfully is this holy day profaned by idleness, by needless journeys and visits, by wilfully staying away from public worship, or by persons going to church merely to meet with neighbors for worldly business, or to show their new clothes; by going to public houses, by reading newspapers, or by mere worldly vain discourse and amusement!

Now, the breach of this commandment, and of the three former, evidently proceeds from want of love to God. If we loved him as the best of beings, we should love his day, revere his name, and prize his worship. And have we not broken all these commandments? Have we not reason to cry, in the words of the Liturgy, "Lord, have mercy upon us, (for having broken these laws) and incline our hearts to keep them in time to come."

Proceed we now to the second table of the law. The six last commandments respect our love to our neighbor. The sum of all is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

The *fifth* commandment respects our nearest neighbor, our relations, our parents. These have the care and expense of education; we can never repay their

kindness. We should honor them by obedience to their directions, and treating them with the greatest respect; and that not only in childhood, but in youth and riper years; we should study to preserve their reputation; to alleviate their infirmities; and, if necessary, to support them in old age.

This command also includes all relative duties, whether to superiors, inferiors, or equals; it includes the duty that servants owe to their masters, and subjects to their governors; it forbids mere eye-service; wasting the property of superiors; or being unfaithful in what they commit to our trust.

The *sixth* commandment directs us how to show our love to our neighbor, by a regard to his life and health; and it forbids not only actual murder, but anger, hatred, malice, and other murderous tempers; for "whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer," 1 John iii. 15. Whoever saith to his brother, Raca, (thou vile fellow) or thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire," so our Lord declares, Matt. v. 22. All unjust wars, fighting, quarrelling, ill usage, or provocations, which may hurt the health or life of another, are forbidden. Many aged parents are murdered by the base conduct of their children; many wives are murdered by the drunkenness, idleness, and abuse of their husbands; and many poor children are murdered by the neglect and wickedness of their parents. Self-murder is also hereby forbidden, no man having a right over his own life, any more than over that of his neighbor. But the worst of all is *soul-murder*. Parents, who neglect to instruct their children, and who are examples of vice to them; drunkards, whoremongers, and adulterers, who allure others to sin with them; all these are soul-murderers.

The *seventh* commandment respects the love of our neighbor, with regard to purity of heart, word, and deed: it forbids not only the actual adultery of married persons, but all fornication, lasciviousness, and wantonness. Every lustful thought, word, or look, makes a person an adulterer in God's sight; for so Christ himself explains this commandment, Matt. v. 28. "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." All private uncleanness, known only to God and conscience, and practised perhaps by those who pass for chaste and virtuous people, is forbidden. Immodest dress tends to the breaking of this law; as also do lewd books, novels, plays, songs, and pictures. In a word, this commandment requires the most per-

fect purity in heart, speech, and behavior, and an endeavor to promote the same in others.

The *eighth* commandment directs us how to show our love to our neighbor, by a regard to his property. It forbids taking to our own use what belongs to another. Covetousness has led men to invent a thousand ways to cheat and defraud. Those who deceive in selling by false weights and measures; those who run in debt, without the prospect of paying again; those who oppress the poor; servants who neglect their business, or waste their master's property, are all thieves in God's esteem. This command extends much further than human laws can reach; and requires that we should treat our neighbor, with respect to his property, as we could wish to be treated by him.

The *ninth* commandment respects our love to our neighbor, in his reputation or good name. Not only taking a false oath before a magistrate, but all lying, slandering, and evil speaking, is forbidden. And, O! how is the world filled with this! And what is the greater part of common conversation but a wanton breach of this law? We ought to be as tender of another man's character and reputation as of our own, and to avoid all such remarks, reports, censures, and ridicule, as we should be unwilling to receive from others.

The *last* commandment enjoins the love of our neighbor, by requiring us to be content with our condition: forbidding us to envy or grieve at the good of our neighbor, or wish to deprive him of it, that we may enjoy it. Yea, it goes much further, and forbids the most secret wish of the heart to obtain any thing that God forbids; and this is particularly *the commandment* that St. Paul speaks of in the text—"I had not known lust, (saith he, ver. 7,) except the law had said thou shalt not covet." When this commandment came with power to his mind, he saw that the secret working, and first motions of inordinate affection, were sins. Before he saw this, he thought all was well, for he was free from gross and outward offences; he was what the world calls a *good liver*: but this commandment showed him the sins of his heart. He found the law was spiritual—reaching to the thoughts and desires of the heart; and thus, "sin, by the commandment, became exceeding sinful." Having taken this brief view of the law, we may proceed,

Secondly, To consider the proper effect of a work of the law upon the heart. "Sin revived, and I died."

The law is "the ministration of condemnation, and of death," 2 Cor. iii. 7—9. If a person could keep it perfectly, it would entitle him to life; for it was originally "ordained to life," but "I found it," saith St. Paul, "to be unto death." The reason is, because we cannot, through the weakness of our fallen nature, keep it perfectly: and if we fail in one point, we are guilty of all. Therefore it is written, Gal. iii. 10, "As many as are of the works of the law (that is, who trust to the works of the law for salvation) are under the curse; for cursed is every one that continueth not in *all things* written in the book of the law, to do them."

Now this is the sad condition of us all, till we believe in Christ for righteousness. It is to no purpose for any one to plead—I have not sinned so and so. Hast thou sinned once? Then thou art guilty, and the law condemns thee to eternal death. The law makes no allowances, no abatements; it does not say a word about *sincere obedience*, or doing as well as we can: No, the law says, Do all things that are commanded: Do them perfectly: Continue all thy life to do them; and then thou mayest be justified by thy work: but, if thou fail in one instance, thou comest under the curse; for "whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all." James ii. 10.

A person may say, it is true I have sinned; but I am very sorry for my sins, and I will amend my life; will not this relieve me from the curse? No. The law has made no provision for repentance, reformation, or pardon. The style of the law is not, Repent, and live; or reform, and live. But, keep the whole law perfectly and continually, and live: transgress it, and die. It is true that *the gospel* brings relief for the sinner, because it reveals Christ and his righteousness: but the law knows nothing of mercy. It is not intended to give life, but to kill, and destroy all hopes of life by obedience, and to force the sinner to fly to Christ. So St. Paul speaks, Rom. iii. 19, "Now we know, that whatsoever the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law; that *every mouth* may be stopped, and *all the world* become guilty before God." This, then, cuts off all hopes of salvation by works; for the Apostle adds, "Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." This is its use. It can go no further. It is by the gospel we have the knowledge of righteousness.

We should be very careful to distin-

guish between the law and the gospel, for many mistakes arise from mingling them together.

"According to the law, salvation is by works; according to the gospel, it is by grace."

"The law says, Do this, and be saved; but the gospel says, Believe this, and thou shalt be saved."

"The law threatens to punish the sinner for the first offence; but the gospel offers him pardon for many offences."

"The law sentences him to death; the gospel offers him justification to life."

"By the law, he is a guilty sinner; by the gospel, he may be made a glorious saint."

"If he die under the guilt of the broken law, hell will be his everlasting portion; if he die a partaker of the grace of the gospel, heaven will be his eternal inheritance."

APPLICATION.

AND now, my dear friends, having laid before you the nature of the law, let me beg you most seriously to consider what has been said, and that with regard to yourselves. What do *you* know of God's law by your own experience? Have you not seen that it is exceeding broad; that it requires you to love God with all your heart, and soul, and strength? and your neighbor as yourself? And have you done this? Alas! your conscience smites you, and your own mouth must condemn you. How often have you said, "We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done." Probably you have often joined in the church service, and said, after the reading of the commandments, "Lord have mercy upon us," that is, forgive our disobedience to them, "and write all these thy laws in our hearts, we beseech thee." Did you mean what you said? If not, you lie before God: if you did, you pleaded guilty; you have confessed you are a breaker of the law, and under its curse.

And have you considered what "a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God?" O, how would your heart melt within you, if you duly considered what it is to be under his curse, and to bear his wrath to all eternity. If you can hear the curses of this law, and not be alarmed for your safety, your heart is hard indeed. May God have mercy upon you, and take away the heart of stone!

Perhaps you are saying, Must I despair, then? No; God forbid! You must de-

spair of obtaining salvation by your works, your sorrow for sin, or your future amendment. And this will make the gospel welcome to you. The law has done its office, if it drives you to Christ. It is preached for this very purpose, and "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness." The gospel reveals a free, full, and everlasting salvation. It publishes to the convinced sinner, pardon and life, as the free gift of God; for Christ has obeyed the precepts of the law in our stead. He has also borne the punishment in our room. "He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." What a blessing have you already received, if God, by his good Spirit, has convinced you of sin! This is the dawn of a glorious day. He will also convince you of righteousness, and show you that it may be yours. Cast yourselves down at the footstool of mercy. Confess your sins. Acknowledge your guilt. Own your helplessness. Cry for pardon. Fly to Jesus, who waits to be gracious, and all shall yet be well. He hath wounded, that he may heal; he hath killed, that he may make alive. You now will be glad of the physician, for you feel your sickness; and he waits to be gracious. You are weary and heavy laden, and he will give you rest.

"Go, you that rest upon the law,
And madly seek salvation there,
Look to the flame that Moses saw,
And shrink, and tremble, and despair.

"But I'll retire beneath the cross;
Savior, at thy dear feet I lie!
And the keen sword that Justice draws,
Flaming and red, shall pass me by."

PRAYER.—Most holy God, thou art the Creator of all mankind! Thou hast made man a rational being, and given to him for the rule of his actions, a law which is holy, just, and good! It was meet, right, and our bounden duty to keep thy law, which justly requires of us to love thee with all our heart, and to love our neighbors as ourselves; but, alas! we have been far from doing this,—we have sinned against thee, and broken thy holy law, in thought, word, and deed. Thy law, O God, is spiritual, and reaches to the secret thoughts of the heart, requiring truth in the inward parts; but we confess, with shame and grief, that we have regarded iniquity in our hearts, and often cherished unholy desires for things forbidden! We find, therefore, that the law which was ordained unto life, condemns us to death, by reason of our transgression, and curses the offender, even for a single sin. We, therefore, would not go about to establish our own righteousness; for by the deeds of the law can no one be justified. We desire, therefore, through the law, to be dead to the law, and no longer to seek justification by it; but we would gladly embrace the gospel, which assures us that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the

law, by being made a curse for us: for his sake, O most merciful Father, blot out all our iniquities, and let us be accepted in the Beloved!—to whom, with thee, and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, world without end! Amen.

SERMON IV.

CHRIST, THE END OF THE LAW FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Rom. x. 4. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

THE two principal parts of Scripture, which it concerns us most to know, are the Law and the Gospel. "He who can rightly distinguish between these," says Luther, "is a good divine;" and we may add, that he who knows how to use both aright, in an experimental and practical manner, is a good Christian.

The nature and use of the law has been already considered. The proper effect of it is the same in every believer as it was in St. Paul. "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." The person brought into this state will be put on the inquiry—How then can I come before God and hope for pardon? If the law be so holy and strict—if it can do nothing for me, but convince me of sin, and condemn me for it—by what means can I be accepted?

Now there are but two ways, that ever were proposed of God, or devised by man: the one according to the old covenant, Do, and live; the other, according to the new—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Whatever ways and means have been thought of, by people of all religions, they may be reduced to these two—*Works*, or *Grace*. And these cannot be mixed; for if any merit be allowed to works, there is an end to grace; and if salvation be of grace, then there is no place for the merit of works. So St. Paul speaks, Rom. xi. 6. "If by grace, then it is no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work." So that you see salvation cannot be by grace and works mixed, it must be by one or the other alone; and we are repeatedly assured in the Scripture, that "by grace are we saved, through faith," and "not by works, lest any man should boast," Eph. ii. 8, 9.

It is of vast importance to be rightly informed on this head. This may be inferred from what St. Paul says of the Jews, Rom. ix. 30, &c. "The Gentiles (saith he) who

followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith: but Israel, which followed after righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness." This, you will say, is strange! What can be the reason of it? He tells us, ver. 31. "Because they sought it not by faith." How then? "As it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. Alas, how many thousands called Christians, have stumbled in the same way. God preserve us from it! How earnestly did the good apostle wish for the salvation of his mistaken brethren. His heart's desire and prayer to God for them was, that they might be saved." He saw, that while they were looking for life by their works, they were not in the way of salvation. It is true, they had a great zeal for God, but it was good for nothing; it was founded in ignorance. "They were ignorant of God's righteousness," namely, this in the text; and being ignorant of this, and yet wanting a righteousness, "they went about to establish their own;"—they tried to set it up, and make it stand for their acceptance; even their own poor, imperfect, ceremonial, and outward works; but they were totally insufficient for that purpose; and thus through the pride of their hearts, which scorned to be entirely beholden to free grace, they refused to stoop, and submit to be saved by the righteousness of another, even of Christ, who is said in the text to be the "end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." May God keep us from this worst sort of pride; and enlighten our minds while we attend to the three following particulars.

I. Jesus Christ, by his obedience and death, performed a perfect righteousness.

II. In so doing, he is the end of the law; and,

III. This righteousness is given to every believer.

I. Jesus Christ, by his obedience and death, performed a perfect righteousness.

"God made man upright." He gave him a law to be the rule of his actions, including a promise if he kept it, and a threatening if he broke it. If he obeyed the law perfectly, God would esteem him righteous. Adam fell; and, with him, all his posterity; for he was appointed their head and representative. "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners," Rom. v. 19. Our nature is now corrupt; and we are born with enmity in our hearts against God. "The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither can it

be," while it remains carnal. But the law is not altered. It requires what it always did, Love. This was always due from man to his Creator, and always will, whether men pay it or not. If man refuse to give it, he is a rebel and an idolater. The law being ever the same, it thunders out its dreadful curses against every sinner, for every sin. But the law provides no remedy. It will not accept of sincere obedience, instead of perfect obedience. It says not a word of accepting a sinner's tears for payment; or admitting his future obedience as a recompense for past sins. No, it constantly demands supreme love and perfect obedience; and condemns the sinner for the want of it in a single instance.

"But what the law could not do, because of the weakness of the flesh, God has done another way." God has sent his Son to be our righteousness. As the law could not abate in its demands, and must have obedience from the creature, or punish the sinner; Jesus Christ graciously undertook to obey and suffer for his people; to obey all the precepts of the law, and to suffer all its pains and penalties. The law required perfect obedience of them; Christ came as their surety to obey for them; and so, as it is written, "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

This blessed and comfortable truth may be fully proved from many scriptures. Take the following, 2 Cor. v. 21. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Jesus Christ knew no sin. He was free from sin in his nature; that holy thing which was born of the virgin being the Son of God. His whole life was as pure as his birth. He knew no sin in thought, word, or deed. He challenged his bitterest enemies to prove him a sinner—"Which of you, said he, accuseth me of sin?" Yea, the great enemy, the devil, came and "found nothing in him;" no sin in his heart; no sin in his life. Thus was he the pure and spotless Lamb of God, prepared to bear away the sin of the world.

But Jesus Christ, who knew no sin, was "*made sin*," that is, by imputation; it was reckoned to him; put to his account; in the same manner as his righteousness is imputed to us, or put to our account. Out of his great love to his people, he became their surety, to answer for their sins, and to bear their punishment. So the prophet Isaiah speaks, chap. liii. 4, &c. "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our

sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all."

The design of Christ's being made sin for us was, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Righteousness is a perfect conformity to the law of God, without which no man can be saved; for it is written, "The *unrighteous* shall not inherit the kingdom of God," 1 Cor. vi. 9. Now we are all unrighteous, because we have broken the law. "There is none righteous" upon earth in himself: "no, not one." And yet without a righteousness, we cannot be saved. What then can we do? Where can we look? Only to Jesus. "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength." "It is not said, in my own works, in my own repentance, no, nor in my own faith, but in the LORD JESUS have I righteousness—righteousness for justification, and strength for sanctification. An imputed righteousness to procure my acceptance; an imparted strength to produce my holiness. *Surely*, which expresses a firm persuasion, and an unshaken affiance." To him give all the prophets witness; for "this righteousness of God without the law, is witnessed by the law and the prophets." Hear what the prophet Daniel says of him, ch. ix. 24.—"To finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness." All this Christ actually did by his obedience unto death; and thus he became the end of the law, which is the second thing we proposed.

II. Jesus Christ, by his righteousness, is become the end of the law; for

1. Hereby he put an end to the *ceremonial* law, or those ordinances, such as sacrifices, which were types or emblems of him. You may remember, that our Savior, just before his death, cried out, "*It is finished!*"—as if he had said—My engagements with the Father are accomplished—the types and prophecies are fulfilled—my dreadful sufferings are at an end—the ceremonial law is abolished. Thus "the law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ."

2. The *moral* law, or law of the ten commandments, was hereby satisfied and magnified; according to the prophecy, (Is. xlii. 21.) "He will magnify the law and make it honorable." The law must have its end, and be completely fulfilled, or we cannot appear as righteous before God; but we are unable to fulfil it ourselves. What we, however, could not do, He, as

our surety, has done. The law demands a righteousness of us; this is the end at which it aims, but we cannot effect it. Christ has done it for us, and is become the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. With this the law is satisfied, and, like the avenger of blood, pursues the sinner only till he takes refuge in Christ; in him the believer finds a sanctuary, and the law retires, satisfied, and well pleased for his righteousness' sake.

We have only now to show, in the

Third place, That this righteousness is given to every believer; or, that it is by faith we become interested therein.

The righteousness wrought out by Jesus is freely given to the believer; so St. Paul says, Rom. v. 16. "The judgment was by one (offence) to condemnation, but *the free gift* is of many offences to justification."

If it be asked, How can the righteousness of another be made ours? We answer, in the same manner that our sins were made Christ's, that is, by imputation. Christ, who had no sin of his own, was made sin for us; reckoned as a sinner, and dealt with as such; so we, who have no righteousness of our own, are made the righteousness of God *in him*—not in ourselves. The sins of the elect were not inherent in Christ, but put to his account; so the righteousness of Christ is not inherent in us, but imputed to us; and God is graciously pleased to deal with us accordingly: he treats us as if we had not sinned, and accepts us as perfectly righteous, so that there is no condemnation whatever to us.

The nature of this may be learned from the dealings of mankind with one another. We read in St. Paul's Epistle to Philemon, to whom he wrote in behalf of Onesimus, a runaway servant, who was afterwards converted, desiring him to receive him again—"If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, saith Paul, *impute it to me*," put it to my account. And thus it is with bondsmen, or sureties, who make themselves liable to pay the debt of another; what they pay is imputed to the person for whom they are bound, and he is reckoned to have paid it by them: and thus as a plain man expresses it, "The gospel is nothing but good news—that a rich man is come into the country, to pay poor people's debts."

Now this glorious gift of righteousness becomes ours by faith; it is therefore called "the righteousness of faith;" and "the righteousness of God, which is by faith, and which is to, and upon, all that believe." Hence, also, we are said to be jus-

tified by faith; and "to be saved by grace, through faith."

The person who has been convinced of sin by the law, alarmed by his sense of danger, led to seek for salvation, and enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, gladly receives this gift of righteousness. He sees no other way. He is pleased with this way. He receives this righteousness, and relies upon it for his acceptance with God.

We must always remember, that the only person who can or will receive this righteousness, is one who has been convinced that he is unrighteous in himself; and who is looking out for deliverance from that state in which the law leaves him. He hears the proposal of the gospel; assents to it as true; delights in it as good; renounces all other ways of obtaining relief, and heartily consents to be saved by grace alone. This is that faith frequently described in the Scripture by receiving Christ—coming to Christ—and trusting in Christ.

APPLICATION.

AND now, my dear friends, consider, I beseech you, the great importance of this subject. That great reformer, *Luther*, said, "that justification by faith is that article on which the whole church must stand or fall." It was the pillar of the Reformation. It is the leading doctrine of the Church of England. In one of the thirty-nine articles, which you will do well to read, this grand truth is thus expressed: "We are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort." The prayer-book speaks the same language. Perhaps you may remember these expressions: "O Lord God, who seest that we put not our trust in any thing that we do." Again, "We lean only on the hope of thy heavenly grace." In another place, "We do not presume to come to this thy table, trusting in our own righteousness."

Take also a few passages from the book of Homilies. "Man cannot make himself righteous by his own works, neither in whole nor in part: for that were the greatest arrogancy and presumption in man that Antichrist could set up against God, to affirm that man might, by his own works, take away his sins, and so justify himself." In another place we have these excellent words, "Christ is now become the righteousness of all them that do truly believe in him; He, for them, paid the ransom by

his death; He, for them, fulfilled the law in his life. Once more, "This righteousness, which we so receive of God's mercy, and Christ's merits, embraced by faith, is taken, accepted, and allowed of God, our perfect and full justification."

Think of this matter with respect to yourselves.—You must die. You must appear before a holy God, who hates sin, and has declared that the soul that sinneth shall die. Are you not asking,—"Where-with shall I come before the Lord, and appear before the most high God?" You have now heard. Not by works of righteousness which you have done. These are imperfect and insufficient. The best of them is mixed with sin. Trust not to them. Renounce them all, and say with St. Paul, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but dung and dross, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having on mine own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God, by faith." If you trust to any thing else, you "frustrate," as much as you can, "the grace of God," and in effect say, that "Christ died in vain." This is a blasphemy that you do not intend, but all self-righteousness speaks this horrid language. Remember what is written, 1 Cor. iii. 11, "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." This alone can bear the weight of a sinner's salvation; every other will give way when the storm comes, and bury the builder in its ruins.

But I hope better things of you, my brethren, even the things which accompany salvation. I hope you are convinced of sin, and also of righteousness; that you are hungering and thirsting after it. Be of good comfort. It is the gift of God, freely bestowed, without any deservings on the part of the sinner. "Ask, and ye shall receive. Seek, and ye shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." Pray to God for faith. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to produce it. Faith cometh by hearing. Continue to hear his word; and expect, that, in waiting upon God, he will enable you to mix faith with it, that so it may profit your soul.

Have any of you, my brethren, put on the Lord Jesus? Is he the foundation of your hopes? Is his righteousness the rock on which you build? the wedding garment in which you resolve to appear before him? I call upon you to rejoice. Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. Blessed is your heart, for therewith ye have believed unto salvation. Now you may say with the Church, (Isa. lxi. 10.) "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my

soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness!"—"A robe, that hides every sin, which in thought, word, or deed, I have committed. A robe, which screens from the sword of justice, the curse of the law, and all the vengeance which my iniquities have deserved. A robe, which adorns and dignifies my soul; renders it fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." Happy believer! go on thy way rejoicing. The sting of death is gone. Who shall condemn thee? God hath justified thee. Thou knowest in whom thou hast believed; and he will assuredly keep that which thou hast committed unto him. Wear this righteousness as thy breastplate. It shall guard thy heart from fear, in sickness and in death; yea, thus defended, thou shalt appear with boldness in the presence of God. Filled with holy joy and gratitude, let thy lips and life proclaim the same faith which justifies the soul, sanctifies the heart; that this doctrine is according to godliness; and that, "the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, teacheth thee to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present evil world." Let the following lines be the sincere language of every soul:

"Be all my heart, and all my ways,
Directed to thy single praise;
And let my glad obedience prove,
How much I owe, how much I love."

The LAW and GOSPEL distinguished.

THE Law commands, and makes us know,
What duties to our God we owe;
But 'tis the Gospel must reveal
Where lies our strength to do his will.

The Law discovers guilt and sin,
And shows how vile our hearts have been;
Only the Gospel can express
Forgiving love, and cleansing grace.

What curses doth the Law denounce
Against the man who fails but once!
But in the Gospel Christ appears,
Pard'ning the guilt of numerous years.

My soul, no more attempt to draw
Thy life and comfort from the law;
Fly to the hope the Gospel gives,
The man who trusts the promise lives.

WATTS.

PRAYER.—O God of our salvation, we rejoice to hear that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth! May we be true believers, that he may be the end of the law for us! We rejoice in believing that what the law could not do for us, because of the weakness and infirmity of our fallen nature, thou, O God, in thy infinite wisdom and love, hast done in another way,—even by giving thy dear Son to be our righteousness! He was

made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. He perfectly obeyed all his precepts in his holy life; he endured its heaviest penalties in his meritorious death, and thus brought in an everlasting righteousness, by which the law is not only satisfied, but magnified, and made honorable!—O then enable each of us to say, “In the Lord have I righteousness and strength: I will greatly rejoice in the Lord:—my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness!”—to him be glory, honor, and praise, now and for evermore! Amen.

SERMON V.

THE FALL OF MAN.

Ecc. vii. 29.—God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

THESE are the words of Solomon, the king of Israel; and appear to be the result of much observation and experience. Possessed of superior talents, and placed in the highest station, he resolved to attain the utmost degree of wisdom: but his success was not equal to his wishes. He perceived, however, the extreme folly of having so many wives and concubines; and says, verse 28,—“One man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found;” that is, amongst his courtiers and flatterers, one man, perhaps, among a thousand, he found, on whom he could depend; but not one among his thousand wives and concubines. “But this only, saith he, have I found—that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.” This he was sure of. He had no doubt respecting this: and to this apostasy of man he traces up the evils he saw and felt.

These words represent two things—namely,

The original and apostate state of man.

First, let us consider the *original* state of man. “God made man upright.”

Man signifies the first man Adam; the father and head of all men; in whom the whole human race was included. God *made* him; formed him out of the dust of the earth; and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, Gen. ii. 7. God made him *upright*; this does not mean in his bodily stature, but in the frame and disposition of his mind. “God created man in his own image, in his own likeness.” He was naturally and habitually righteous. His heart was properly disposed towards God; with a love of good, and a hatred of evil. The law was not written for him in tables of stone, but it was written upon his heart.

His *mind* was endued with true knowledge, (Col. iii. 2.) He knew his Maker. He knew his glorious perfections; his power, his wisdom, his holiness, and his goodness. He knew his relation to God, his duty to him, and his dependence on him. He saw the glory and goodness of God in his works. He studied them, that he might glorify God in them; hence we find him giving names to the creatures, which, in the original, show that he had observed them, and understood their nature.

His *will* was conformed to the will of God. It had no such bias to evil as we now have; but it was disposed to comply with the divine will in all respects.

The *affections* of his soul were holy and heavenly. He loved God above all. He considered him as the supreme good, and the grand source of his happiness. He loved the creatures for God’s sake; and all the beauty of sweetness he found in them, led him to adore and love his God the more.

In this state, man was truly blessed and honorable. His mind was calm. His conscience was easy. He knew no guilt. He felt no shame. He was a stranger to fear. No angry passions disturbed his soul. His body was free from disease and pain. He conversed with God, and was as happy as Paradise could make him.

Had he continued in this state of uprightness for a certain time, he would probably have been translated, without pain or death, to a heavenly state, still happier; and all his posterity would have been confirmed in the same condition of holiness and happiness, without the danger of falling, as he did: for as it is certain, that all mankind, descended from Adam, are involved in the consequences of his fall; we may justly conclude, that had he maintained his integrity, they would all have shared in the happy fruit of it. But, alas! though “God made man upright, he hath sought out many inventions.” “The crown is fallen from his head, the glory is departed from him.” This is a point which it greatly concerns us to know. This is one of the first principles of our religion, on which all the rest depend. For if man is not at *variance* with his Creator, what need of a *Mediator*? If he be not *depraved* and *undone*, what necessity of a *Restorer* and *Savior*? If he is not *enslaved* to sin, why is he *redeemed* by Jesus Christ? If he is not *polluted*, why must he be washed in the blood of the *Lamb*? If his soul is not *disordered*, what occasion is there for a divine *Physician*? In a word, if he is not *born in sin*, why is a *new birth* so necessary,

that Christ solemnly declares, without it no man can "see the kingdom of God!" Let us then attend, in the second place, to

The present apostate state of man.

Satan, full of hatred to God, and envying the happiness of man, devised the method of his destruction with infernal cunning. He assaulted "the weaker vessel" first; questioned, and then denied the word of God; represented the command not to eat of the tree as very severe; and the eating of it as quite harmless, yea, as highly advantageous. "Ye shall not surely die," said the devil, though God had said, "Ye shall surely die." Thus Eve was deceived, and became the unhappy means of seducing her husband. Thus both our parents fell from their original state of purity and bliss; and, as a token of God's dreadful displeasure, were banished from the garden of Eden.

But you must observe, that in and by this fall of our first parents, all their posterity likewise fell. So, St. Paul assures us, Rom. v. 12, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." And again verse 15, "through the offence of one, many are dead;" and again, verse 18, "by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation."

In consequence of our fall in Adam, our nature is wholly corrupt. Our hearts are naturally carnal and worldly. We forsake God, the foundation of happiness; and vainly strive to make ourselves happy in sin and folly; or, as our text has it—"we have sought out many inventions"—many vain reasonings—many foolish questions and speculations! we may read our depravity in our misery. In our present fallen state we can relish only earthly things, and they all conspire to disappoint our expectations. What are the numberless inventions of men, but weak and wicked attempts to procure happiness without God, and contrary to his will. What inventions to please the imaginations? Hence the loads of novels which burden the world, and are read and relished far better than the word of truth. What inventions to delight the eyes! Hence plays and shows, and all the vanity of dress. What inventions to please the ear! Hence all the charms of music, vocal and instrumental. What inventions to gratify the taste? Hence all the art of cookery, collecting niceties from every quarter of the world. Of how many may it be said, that their kitchen is their temple, the cook their priest, and their belly their god! What inventions are there to kill time! Short as life is, and we all complain

it is so short, yet it drags on too slowly for many. Hence the various amusements, especially playing at cards, invented on purpose to kill time. Ah, how soon will these murderers of time wish for one of their lost hours, when time with them shall be no more! What inventions are there to gratify pride! What contrivances to make us look greater and finer than our neighbors! What inventions to become rich and great! for this, men spend all their strength, and risk their health and life. What inventions to deceive one another, and to appear what we really are not!

But there are worse inventions still in matters of religion. What inventions of doctrine! how many teach, for divine truth, the commandments of men! What inventions in the worship of God! Hence all idolatry and superstition; hateful to God, and hurtful to men. What inventions as to the way of acceptance with God! There is but one true way, and that is Christ; but instead of this, men have invented a thousand ways; pretending, by their own virtue, goodness, morality, charity, and devotion, to recommend themselves to God.

Not to dwell any longer on the word "inventions," let us take a general view of man in his fallen state.

See what ignorance veils his mind! How wretched and near to the state of brute beasts are millions of the human race; the untutored savages, and the degraded blacks, yea, even Europeans, who are more enlightened. Americans also, a people more highly favored than any others, a people inhabiting a land of civil and religious liberty; a land full of Churches and Bibles! O how many thousands are in darkness and the shadow of death! Yes, even many of those, who are scholars, and wise enough in worldly things, know not God, know not themselves, know not Jesus Christ. How many that seem to be religious, worship "an unknown God," being ignorant of their fallen state, and therefore ignorant of the salvation of the Redeemer!

But ignorance is not all. Consider the *carnality* of the mind. The heart is gone from God. It does "not like to retain God in its knowledge." How many are saying to God, "Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways!" And say, my brethren, is it not so with some of you? Why else is it that you do not love prayer? Why do you neglect the bible? Why do you break the sabbath? Why do you take pleasure in the company of the wicked, while you laugh at serious people, and true piety? Your conscience sometimes smites you for this, for you know they are right,

and you are wrong; and were you on a dying bed, you would gladly be in their state. You have an immortal soul, which you know must be saved for ever, or lost for ever, and yet you live as if you had no soul at all. And though religion be the great business of man, it is the only business that you neglect; it is the only business that you hate to see others mind. And does not this convince you that you are carnal indeed?

"Even a child is known by his doings," "foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child," Pro. xx. 2. xxii. 15. Have you never observed the envy, pride, and passion of little children? They could not learn these evil tempers from others. They brought them into the world with them. They were born in sin.

Look at young people. The seeds of sin which were in their nature, spring up and grow apace. The bud of vice now begins to blow. See the forward rash youth, full of pride and self-conceit, despising his parents, impatient of control, bursting every bond, that he may pursue his pleasures; and determined to indulge his lusts, though at the expense of health, character, and life itself. O who can lament, as it deserves, the shameful, the worse than brutal lewdness of both sexes? This vice awfully prevails; and though some may laugh at it, and think it a little sin, let them know, that "whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Heb. xiii. 4.

What shall we say of *profaneness*? "Because of swearing the land mourneth;" our country groans under the burden of this horrid crime, this unprofitable vice; the streets, the roads, the fields, the ale-houses, ring with the horrid language of hell. The throat of the swearer is "an open sepulchre," belching forth, in oaths and curses, a stench more hateful to God, than the smell of a human carcass to man. This is so common that we almost forget its criminality; but what saith the law? "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain." Surely this is a sin, which, above most others, shows that man is wofully fallen and wicked; or how could he practise, how could he love, this unprofitable vice?

Time would fail us to speak of a thousand other evils which proceed out of the heart. Read the catalogue given by our Savior himself, Matt. xx. 19. "Evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemy; these come forth from the heart, and they defile the man."

The Scriptures abound with testimonies

to this sad truth. Read the following Gen. vi. 5, "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually; and it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." See also Gen. viii. 21, "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Read also Job xi. 12, "Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt;" and chap. xv. 14, "What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous? And lest any should think that all people are not so bad, and that these things are said only of openly wicked persons, observe what the following Scripture declares, Psalm xiv. 2, 3, "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. They are *all* gone aside; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good; no, not *one*." In a word, see the true picture of fallen man, in Jerem. xvii. 9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

Thus, then, is this terrible, but useful truth, fully confirmed. None can deny it, without denying the word of God. But if these testimonies are not enough, turn your eyes to the state of mankind in this present evil world, and you will find sad proof that man is in a fallen state. How astonishing is the quantity of misery in the world! How many thousands are rending the air with the cry of pain or wretchedness! Strange, that ever there should be so much; that there should be any suffering in the creation of a good God! Doubtless there is a cause for it; and if the Bible had not told us what it is, we should be for ever in the dark. O, Adam, what hast thou done! O, man, what art thou always doing! Is not "the earth cursed for man's sake?" and why doth it bring forth so plentifully thorns and briers, while useful plants, and fruit, and grain, cannot be produced without great labor? The earth itself preaches to us this humbling doctrine, and while man gains his daily bread by the sweat of his brow, let him learn that sin is the fatal cause.

Sometimes the earth is deluged with dangerous floods; at other times it is hardened with excessive drought. Dreadful peals of thunder shake the heavens; fearful flashes of lightning fill the skies. Horrible earthquakes cleave the ground, and open a sudden grave for thousands. Burning mountains belch forth their destructive

contents. The seas, raised to fury by stormy winds, bury the poor helpless seamen. Terrible plagues sweep away whole cities in a few days. What is the language of these fearful messengers? They all unite to say, Man is fallen, and God is angry.

Consider also the sorrows of mothers in bringing forth their offspring; the cries, and tears, and pains, and death of little babes. Think of the various fierce and agonizing diseases of mankind. What is the world but a huge hospital? and where almost the house that there is not one sick? How many of our poor fellow-creatures are pining in poverty, or racked with pain, or raving with madness? Turn your eyes to the dying bed of a fellow-mortal. Look at his ghastly countenance. See how he is convulsed; how he labors for life. At last, with a mournful groan, he bids adieu to this wretched world. Behold the pale and lifeless corpse. In a few days, perhaps in a few hours, it begins to change. Putrefaction seizes it; and the body, once so dear and pleasant, the parent, the wife, and the child, must be "buried out of our sight;" must be consigned to the dark, cold, and loathsome grave, to become the prey of sordid worms. What a terrible proof does all this afford of our sinful state!

IMPROVEMENT.

AND now what shall we say to these things? Is this the state of man! How necessary it is that he should know it! We observed at the beginning, that it is one of the first principles of our religion, and without knowing this, we cannot understand the rest.—"When the veil is upon the heart, the veil is upon every thing." There are three things, the absolute necessity of which we may learn from what has been said, namely, *Redemption, Repentance, and Regeneration.*

1. *Redemption.* God hates sin with infinite abhorrence. Sin renders us abominable in his sight. "The wages of sin is death." "He will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." How then can we escape the damnation of hell? Blessed be God, he hath so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son to be our Redeemer, and Savior. Jesus Christ has died for sinners "the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." By his blood, reconciliation is made for iniquity; and by his Spirit, our nature is renewed; so that we may be fully restored to the favor and image of God. "O Jesus, what hast thou not done to loosen guilt and pain, to sweeten adversity, to blunt the sting of death, to restore

happiness, in some degree, to the earth, and to insure it in eternity!"

2. See also the need of *Repentance*, or such a sight and sense of sin as leads to godly sorrow and self-abhorrence. "Sin is the only thing that God hates, and almost the only thing that man loves;" but grace will make us hate it heartily, and ourselves on account of it. Alas, how far from this are many, who yet call themselves Christians! Hear the proud Pharisee crying, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are:" or boasting that he has a good heart, and a clear conscience; that he does his duty to the best of his power, and never hurt any body in his life. This is the wretched cant of poor deluded souls, who know not the "plague of their own hearts." God forbid this should be our case. Let us rather, like the good men we read of in Scripture, confess our sins, lothe ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes. Then shall we thankfully receive the free mercy and forgiving love of God through Jesus Christ.

3. From hence also we may learn the necessity of *Regeneration*. Nothing short of this is sufficient: for "striving against nature is like holding a weathercock with one's hand; as soon as the force is taken off, it veers again with the wind." If we are born in sin, we must be born again. So our Savior solemnly declared to Nicodemus, John iii. 3. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." We must have a new heart; that is, a new disposition of heart; such a change within, as may justly be called a new creation. And this is far more than the baptism of water. We must be "born of water and of the Holy Ghost;" that is, we must experience the power of the Spirit on our minds, which is like that of water on the body, to cleanse and purify it from sin. Water in baptism, is "the outward visible sign," but there is also "an inward and spiritual grace;" and this is "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness." The regenerate person hates sin, and earnestly desires deliverance from it. The sincere language of the soul is—"Go, sin; go, for ever, thou rebel to God; thou crucifier of Christ; thou griever of the Spirit; thou curse of the earth; thou poison in my blood; thou plague of my soul, and bane of all my happiness."

How important then is the knowledge of our final state! "it is the devil's masterpiece to make us think well of ourselves." It is God's great and gracious work to discover to us our true condition. May

the Holy Spirit so bless what has now been said concerning it, that, discovering the disease of our nature, we may highly prize the great physician of our souls; may lie down before a holy God in the dust of humiliation yet looking up for pardoning mercy, and for sanctifying grace, daily to renew us in the spirit of our mind, till, being made meet for heaven, we are admitted into that blessed state, where sin and sorrow shall be known no more; and where, with all the Redeemed, we shall celebrate our glorious recovery from the ruins of the fall, ascribing salvation to God and the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER.—O Thou God of infinite purity and holiness, when it pleased thee to make man, thou didst make him in thine own image, after thine own likeness, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness! Thou didst make him upright: his mind was endued with the knowledge of thee; his will was conformed to thy will; and the affections of his heart were holy and spiritual: but O how soon did he fall from that happy estate, by eating the forbidden fruit, exposing himself to the threatened curse, and involving all his posterity in sin and misery!

We confess, O Lord, with shame, the total depravity of our nature! Our minds are veiled in ignorance,—our hearts are carnal and full of enmity against thee; and from this bitter fountain have flowed the streams of innumerable transgressions.

We desire to repent as in dust and ashes. We pray to be renewed in the spirit of our minds, that we may become new creatures in Christ Jesus,—that being interested in the great redemption, we may be restored both to thy favor and thy image, so that finally we may be admitted into thy presence, and obtain an inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith in thy dear Son, who, with thee and the Holy Ghost, are one God, blessed for evermore! Amen.

SERMON VI.

REDEMPTION.

Eph. i. 6.—In whom we have redemption through his blood.

THE word *Redemption*, is perhaps the most comprehensive that our own language, or any other, can afford. Redemption itself is certainly the greatest blessing that God can bestow, or man receive. 'Tis this that strikes the joyful strings of the heavenly harpers.' This is the burden of that ever-new song, which none but the redeemed can sing—"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, for thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

The salvation of man, under whatever name it is described, always supposes his fallen, guilty, ruined, and helpless state;

nor can we understand one word of the gospel aright without knowing this. He is dangerously diseased; Christ is the physician, and salvation his cure. He is naked: Christ covers him with his righteousness. He is famished: Christ is his meat and drink. He is in darkness: Christ is his light. He stands at the bar, accused and ready to be condemned: Christ appears as his surety, and pleads his righteousness for his justification. So here in the text. Man is in bondage: Christ pays the ransom, and procures his discharge.

Come then, my friends, and let us attend to this great subject; and remember, that we are fixing our minds on the same delightful theme that engages the hearts and harps of glorified saints; and which will employ our grateful tongues to all eternity, if we are found among the ransomed of the Lord.

Redemption, among men, is the deliverance of persons out of a state of captivity and bondage by an act of power, or rather by the payment of a price for their ransom. The recovery of God's chosen people from the ruins of the fall is therefore described by this term; because they are, by nature, in a wretched state of bondage and slavery, from which they could never deliver themselves; and in which, if not delivered, they must perish for ever. But Christ, the Son of God, out of his infinite love and compassion, undertook the deliverance: and by paying down a sufficient price, even his own precious blood, as a ransom, delivered them from ruin, and restored them to liberty.

That we may better understand this redemption of lost man, let us consider—*his captivity—his helplessness—and the means of his deliverance.*

Consider, first, the state of man as a captive and a slave. Captives, among men, are persons taken in war and made prisoners. In many cases they have been used very ill; put to shame; doomed to hard labor; confined in chains, prisons, or mines; led at the chariot-wheels of their conquerors; and sometimes put to death in a wanton and cruel manner. To this day the poor Blacks are treated as captives, and kept in a state of bondage. Notwithstanding the praiseworthy efforts that have been made to abolish the nefarious traffic in human blood, ships are fitted out in different countries, and sent to Africa, on purpose to get hundreds and thousands of them for slaves. They are stolen, or procured under various and wicked pretences; torn from the bosoms of their dearest relations; forced away from their own

country; closely stowed together in a ship, and, when brought to the West-Indies, sold like beasts in a market. They are then doomed to hard labor, and often to cruel usage, till death puts an end to their miseries, or their liberty is obtained by paying a sum of money for it. In such a case, a man may be said to be redeemed; and, ceasing to be a slave, he becomes a freeman. This may give us some idea of the nature of Redemption. When God made man, he made him upright; he made him free; but he soon lost his liberty. Satan attacked him, and prevailed against him; and not against him only, but against all his posterity. In this state we are born; in this we live; and in this we die and perish, unless the Redemption of Christ is applied to our souls by the Holy Spirit. You would pity a number of poor captives, if you saw them in heavy chains; if you saw them stripped of their clothing, robbed of their wealth, or sold like beasts; if you saw them cruelly abused and beaten, and pining to death in pain and misery. Well, this is our own state by nature. We are conquered by Satan; far removed from our original happy condition; deprived of our true riches, the image and favor of God; tied and bound with the chains of our sins, basely employed by the devil in the horrid drudgery of our lusts; and, if grace prevent it not, liable to be summoned by death into an awful eternity, to receive the wages of our sin, which is eternal misery.

From this sad condition we cannot deliver ourselves. We have neither the will nor the power. It is the peculiar misery of sinful man, that he knows not his misery. Other captives groan for freedom. Even a bird, or a beast, deprived of liberty, struggles to get free; but more wretched and stupid sinners deny that they are slaves; and foolishly boast, like the Jews, "that they were never in bondage to any man." They hug their yoke; they love their prison, and fancy music in the rattling of their chains. If any here are in this condition, may God open their eyes, and deliver them from the sad infatuation!

But if a man had a *will* to be free, he has not the *power*. What ransom can he offer? Can he make satisfaction to the injured law of God? Can he render back to his Maker the glory of which he has robbed him? Or can he restore to his own soul the image of God, which is lost and spoiled by sin? Can he renew his sinful nature to holiness, or make himself a new creature? No; it is impossible. If the heart of God do not pity; if the hand of

God do not help; he must die a slave, and be the eternal companion of his cruel tyrant and fellow-slaves in the prison of hell.

But blessed be God for Jesus Christ! When there was no eye to pity, no hand to help, his own almighty arm brought salvation. The Son of God, touched with compassion for perishing man, descended from his throne of glory, and visited our wretched abode; and, because those whom he came to redeem were partakers of flesh and blood, "he also himself took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Heb. ii. 14, 15.

Among the Jews, the right of redemption belonged to the kinsman. Jesus Christ, in order to redeem us, became a man, the kinsman of our nature, "bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh; for both he that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Heb. ii. 11.

The redemption of captives is usually by paying a price, or ransom. This Christ paid, and the price was no less than his blood: so says our text—"In whom we have redemption through his blood." And so St. Paul speaks, Eph. i. 18, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ; not by so mean a price as the perishing riches of this world, such as the silver and gold, which are paid for buying poor captives out of bondage, misery, and slavery among men, but it was at no less a price than the noble and invaluable precious blood, sufferings, and death of the Son of God.

Having taken a *general* view of Redemption, let us descend to some particulars, by which we may better understand the subject, and be more affected with it. The natural man is a captive of the *Devil*—of the *Flesh*—of the *World*—of the *Law*, and of the *Grave*. From all these Christ delivers his people.

1. We are all, by nature, captives of the *Devil*. This may seem to you a hard saying; but it is too true; see the proof of it in 2 Tim. ii. 26,—“That they may recover themselves out of the snare of the Devil, who are taken captives by him at his will”—taken alive, as captives of war to be enslaved and ruined by the Devil. O how dreadful is the power of Satan over wicked men! They are not aware of it, or they would earnestly pray, “Lead us not into

temptation, but deliver us from evil," or the evil one. St. John says, "The whole world lieth in wickedness, or in the wicked one," 1 John v. 19; and St. Paul says, "He worketh in the children of disobedience," Eph. ii. 2. So that there is more truth in some common expressions, used by wicked people, than they are aware of; as when they say, "The Devil is in you." It is awfully true of all unconverted sinners. And it deserves notice, how such people continually sport with such words as these—Hell and hellish—Devil and devilish—Damn and damnation. Surely these words show who is their master! and what is likely to be their place and portion. May God discover the evil of such things to all who practise them.

Now, the blessed Redeemer came down from heaven to destroy the works of the Devil. He overcame all his temptations in the wilderness; he triumphed over him on the cross; and when he ascended into heaven, "he led captivity captive;" conquered the conqueror, and bound the strong one. He showed his power over devils, by casting them out of the *bodies* of men; and he still shows his power, by casting them out of the *souls* of all who believe in him. O that he may show this power among us this moment!

Yes, my friends, if we are redeemed from Satan, we are "redeemed to God,"—redeemed to God as his peculiar property; for his honor and service; for communion with him now; and for the everlasting enjoyment of him in glory.

2. We are all, by nature, captives of the *Flesh*; our minds are fleshly; "sin reigns in our mortal bodies; we obey it in the lusts thereof; our members are instruments of unrighteousness; we have yielded our members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity: for his servants we are to whom we obey." Rom. vi. 12, &c.

Is not this true, my friends? are not some here present yet the slaves of sin; one of drunkenness; another of swearing; another of fornication; another of lying; another of thieving, or some other heinous sin? Ah, Sirs, "the end of these things is death:"—"for these things' sake, cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." Alas! how many are strong advocates for human liberty, who are themselves the slaves of corruption! "For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." 2 Pet. ii. 19.

But adored be Jesus, he came to "save us from our sins;" "that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and

righteousness before him all the days of our life." By the power of his Spirit, the people are "born again," and made "new creatures in Christ Jesus; old things pass away, and all things become new." They are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; they walk not according to the flesh; they are enabled to crucify the old man of sin, and put on the new man of grace; and to live, in some degree, in that holiness, without which no man can see the Lord. So St. Paul speaks to the converted Romans, "God be thanked, that (*though*) ye were the servants of sin, ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." Rom. vi. 17, 18.

3. We are all, by nature, captives of the *World*: or, as the scripture expresses it—"Walk according to the course of this world," willingly carried along with the stream of sin, and foolishly thinking we shall do well, because we do like others; forgetting that "broad is the road that leadeth to death, and many there be that walk therein;" while the narrow way to life is found by very few. By nature we are conformed to the world; to its foolish customs, maxims, dress, and amusements; and also to its dangerous, mistaken notions of religion. People are afraid to think for themselves; they take the religion of their neighbors on trust, without examining, by the word of God, whether it be right or wrong, true or false.

But our blessed Lord "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from the present evil world," from the sins, snares, customs, and fashions of the men of this world. St. Peter speaks of being redeemed from "our vain conversation, received by tradition from our fathers." It matters not what we were brought up to, nor what our forefathers lived in: if it was wrong, we must forsake it. We must confess Christ before men, or he will deny us before angels: and we shall not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, if we know it to be the power of God to our own salvation; but rather glory in the cross of Christ, by which we are crucified to the world, and the world to us. Then are we the true disciples of Christ, when we are not of the world, even as he was not of the world.

4. We are all, as sinners, captives and prisoners to the broken *Law* and offended *Justice* of God. The law justly demands of us perfect and perpetual obedience. If we fail in one point, we are guilty of all; and fall under its fearful curse. The law demands our obedience, or our blood. If

we disobey but once, our lives are forfeited. We are condemned already; and, if death finds us in that state, it shuts us up for ever in hell.

But, glory be to the Lamb of God, that he came into the world to save sinners: and as there could be no remission of sins but by the shedding of blood, he freely gave himself up for us, and died for our sins, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." "Thus he gave himself "a ransom" for us; and "redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us," Gal. iii. 13. Hereby, all who believe in him are "delivered from the wrath to come." "There is therefore now no condemnation to them." They have passed from death unto life; and "who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died." In consequence of this they are entitled to peace of conscience, even the peace of God that passeth all understanding.

Finally, we are all, by reason of sin, doomed to *Death*, and shall shortly be prisoners of the *Grave*. This is the house appointed for all living; to this dark abode we must soon remove, and there remain till the great day, when there shall be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust.

But the glorious Redeemer has said of his people, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy plague; O grave, I will be thy destruction!" Yes, Jesus is made unto us redemption; namely, "the redemption of the body;" and "the creature itself," that is, the body, "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God," Rom. viii. 21. Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, "Death is swallowed up in victory! O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

APPLICATION.

AND NOW, my friends, what think you of Redemption? Does it appear to you a little or a great matter? How are your hearts affected with it? Do you know that you are, or once was, in this miserable bondage? You can never desire deliverance, nor love the deliverer, till you know this. When Israel was in Egypt, "they sighed by reason of their bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto

God by reason of their bondage." Again, when Israel was in Babylon, "they sat down by the rivers and wept! yea, they wept when they remembered Zion." Depend upon it, if you never saw this to be your condition, it is your condition now. If you never sought redemption, you never partook of it. If you never saw any excellency or preciousness in Christ, you are yet "in the gall of bitterness, yet in the bond of iniquity." Be advised, when you go home, to retire to some secret place, and, on your bended knees, implore the blessed Redeemer to set you free. Say, with the Psalmist, "Draw nigh to my soul, and redeem it." Look through the bars of your prison to heaven. Cry to the Lord in your trouble, and he will save you out of your distresses. Hear him saying, "Wilt thou be made free?" He stands ready to knock off thy fetters, and set thee at liberty. If it was necessary for *you* to pay the price of redemption, you might well despair! but the price is paid; nothing on your part is wanting, but a heart and a hand to receive it. Come then, for all things are ready. "Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy and with him is plenteous redemption," Psa. cxxx. 7. Here is the sum of the gospel. Here are glad tidings of great joy to souls burdened with sin. Are you afflicted with a sense of your sin and misery? Well, there is hope in Israel concerning this. "Hope in the Lord;" not in yourselves, nor in your own works, but in Jehovah; and your encouragement to do so is—"with him is mercy,"—grace, goodness, bounty. He is, of his own nature, disposed to forgive; and there is this further encouragement—"with him there is plenteous redemption." Christ has shed his precious blood as the ransom price. The redemption is plenteous. The boundless stores of grace and mercy are fully equal to all your wants. Hope then in the Lord, and let your expectation be fixed alone in him; for "he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities."

And you, who, through grace, have believed to the saving of your souls, come and consider the sad state you were in; from which nothing could deliver you but the astonishing ransom of the Savior's blood. O see the malignity of sin, in the Redeemer's bloody sweat in the garden, and in his dreadful pains on the cross. O see what sin has done! See and detest the murderer of thy gracious Lord. Hate it with a perfect hatred, and resolve to wage eternal war against it.

Come and meditate on the love of Christ,

"who loved you, and gave himself for you," and who has, by his Spirit, brought home the Redemption to your heart. There was nothing good in you to engage him to do this; for "while we were yet enemies, Christ died for us." O be thankful for your wonderful deliverance. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy." Had a generous fellow-creature delivered you from Turkish slavery, or from a Spanish inquisition, how would you express your thanks? "O Sir, would you say, I am under inexpressible obligations; I have not such another friend in all the world; I shall never forget your kindness while I live." But no earthly friend can redeem your soul from sin and hell. "O would to God, (said a holy man) I could cause paper and ink to speak the worth and excellency, the high and loud praises of our brother Ransomer! Oh, the Ransomer needs not my report; but if he would vouchsafe to take and use it, I should be happy if I had an errand to this world, but for some few years, to spread proclamations of the glory of the Ransomer, whose clothes were wet and dyed in blood; if even, after that, my soul and body should return to their original nothing."

Thus, my friends, let us think of Christ: and, thus thinking of him, let us show our love by keeping his commandments; ever remembering, that "we are not our own for we are bought with a price; therefore let us glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which are God's." Remember, you are yet in the body, a body of sin and death: and though, through grace, "you delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man, yet is there another law in your members, warring against the law of your mind." "Watch against it then, lest at any time it should bring you into captivity of the law of sin." Stand fast therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free; and rejoice in hope of the complete, everlasting, and glorious liberty of the children of God in a better world.

PRAYER.—FATHER of mercies, and God of all grace, behold, at thy footstool, a company of thy sinful creatures, who, by nature, were slaves of Satan, and led captive by him at his will! We were tied and bound with the chains of our sin, and basely employed in the drudgery of our lusts.

From this sad condition we had neither the will nor the power to deliver ourselves; but, glory be to thy name, when there was no eye to pity, no hand to help, thou didst remember us in

our low estate, and sent thy only-begotten Son, in whom we have redemption, through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins, and a deliverance from all our tyrants!

O that we may be redeemed from sin, from Satan, from this present evil world, and, finally, from the grave! Being liberated by Jesus, may we be free indeed; and constantly watch and pray, lest we be entangled again with the yoke of bondage; and may we ever remember that we are now no longer our own, but being bought with a price, must glorify God with our bodies and our spirits, which are his!

Glory be to thee, blessed Jesus, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood! Blessing, honor, glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever! Amen.

SERMON VII.

REGENERATION, OR THE NEW BIRTH.

John iii. 3. Jesus answered, and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

THE two grand truths of the Christian religion are, our ruin in Adam, and our recovery in Christ: and till we know both these, we can perform no duty, nor enjoy any privilege aright; we can neither serve God here, nor enter into his glory hereafter.

You too must have observed, that the Scripture always divides mankind into two classes—the wicked and the righteous; sinners and saints; believers and unbelievers; heirs of hell and heirs of heaven. These are all mixed together on earth, but they will be separated at the day of judgment; and their eternal state will then be fixed, according to what was their true character here. What then can be of greater importance to us, than to know our real state at present? and observe, that though there is that difference between men, which was just mentioned, we are all by nature in one and the same condition: that is, sinners and children of wrath. So that, unless a change passes upon us, we continue in it, live and die in it, and are lost for ever.

This is the solemn truth, which Jesus Christ in our text declared to Nicodemus. Perhaps you may like to know who he was, and how Christ came to say this to him. I will tell you. Nicodemus was a great man among the Jews. He was a teacher, and a ruler; and having heard that Jesus Christ had said and done many wonderful things, he came to him one night, being ashamed to come by daylight, and said, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God." Jesus Christ

directly begins to teach Nicodemus; and he begins with the most important truth that was ever taught—The necessity of the new birth, which he asserts in the strongest manner possible: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” As if he had said, I, who am the truth itself, assure you, that no man, considering his fallen and corrupt nature, can understand or enjoy the blessings of that kingdom of grace which I am come to set up; nor can he enter the kingdom of glory to which it leads, unless his heart is changed by power from above.

It seems that Nicodemus did not, at first, rightly understand what our Lord meant by this; and he asked how it could be. But our Lord insists upon it again and again, and we doubt not that Nicodemus came to understand it at last, and really to become a new creature. The Lord grant that we also may become new creatures, so as to serve him here, and enjoy him hereafter!

The *new birth* signifies a *great change*, made in the heart of a sinner by the power of the Holy Spirit. It means that something is done in us, and for us, which we cannot do for ourselves; something, to which we were before strangers; something, whereby we begin to live, as we did not live before; yea, something, whereby such a life begins as shall last for ever; for, as by our first birth we are born to die, so, by our second birth, we are born to live for ever.

That we may better understand the new birth, or this change of heart, let us more particularly consider,

I. The *nature* of this change; and,

II. The *necessity* of it.

I. Let us consider the *nature* of this change. “It is not a change of the substance and faculties of the soul. Sin did not destroy the essence of the soul, but its rectitude; so grace does not give a new faculty, but a new quality. It is not destroying the metal, but the old stamp upon it, to imprint a new one. It is not breaking the candlestick, but putting a new light in it. It is a new stringing the instrument, to make a new harmony.

It is a *great change*: or else such a term as “the new birth;” or, “a new creation;” or, “resurrection;” would not be proper. When a child is born, its way of existing, and of getting nourishment, is quite different from what it was before: so by the new birth, we live in a very different manner. The greatness of this change is elsewhere described by “pass-

ing from darkness to light;” yea, by “passing from death to life.” “You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” It makes a man quite the contrary to what he was before; as contrary as East to West; North to South; light to darkness; flesh to spirit. It is such a change, as if a Blackamoor should become white; or a lion become a lamb. In a word, God takes away the heart of stone, and gives a heart of flesh.

It is a *universal change*—“a new *creature*,” a complete creature; not a monster, with some human parts, and others wanting. It is *God’s* work, and therefore perfect in its parts; though there is room for growth in every part, as in a new-born child. O let us not deceive ourselves with a *partial* change; such as taking up some new opinion, or joining a new sect; or leaving off some old sins, or performing some moral or religious duties. The common changes of age and life may occasion some partial alterations; but this is a change of *the whole man*. In the *understanding* there is light instead of darkness. In the *will* there is softness instead of hardness. In the *affections* there is love instead of enmity.

It is an *inward* change. It will indeed produce an outward change, if the life was before immoral; but there may be strict morality without this inward change. Reformation is not Regeneration, though too often mistaken for it. It is a change of *heart*. We must be “renewed in the spirit of our mind,” Eph. iv. 23. “Man looks at the outward appearance, but God looketh at the heart,” God has promised to give his people “a new heart;” and the penitent Psalmist prays for it—“Create in me a clean heart, O God! and renew a right spirit within me.” Without this there is no true change. “The spring and wheels of a clock must be mended, before the hand of the dial will stand right. It may stand right twice in the day, when the time of the day comes to it, but not from any motion or rectitude in itself. So a man may seem by one or two actions to be a changed man; but the inward spring being amiss, it is but a deceit.” There is a great difference between virtue and religion; between morality and holiness. Many people abstain from some sins, and perform some duties, for the sake of health, reputation, or profit; but in the new creature there is a change of *principle*. The principle of a new creature is faith: “faith working by love,” and this abides. He is not like a clock that is wound up, and goes only while it is acted upon by the weight;

but, having the Spirit of God within him, and the life of God in his soul, grace is as "a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."

There is in the new creature a change of the *end* he has in view, as well as the *principle* from which he acts. "The glory of God is the end of the new man: *Self* is the end of the old man." Nothing is a greater evidence of being born again, than to be taken off the old centre of self, and to aim at the glory of God in every thing; whether we eat or drink; whether we are in private or public; whether we are engaged in religious or in common affairs; to desire and aim sincerely at the glory of God; knowing that "we are not our own, but bought with a price, we are to glorify God with our body, soul, and spirit, all which are his."

That the new birth is such a change as has been described; namely, a *great* change, a *universal* change, and an *inward* change, will still more plainly appear, if you consider the alteration it makes in a person's views and apprehensions. He has new thoughts of *God*, of *himself*, of the *world*, of *eternity*, of *Jesus Christ*, and of *all divine ordinances*.

He has new thoughts of *God*. Before, he lived, in a great measure, "without God in the world;" without any true knowledge of God; without any proper regard to God; and was ready to think God "altogether such a one as himself." But now he sees that with God there is "terrible majesty," perfect purity, strict justice, and that he is indeed greatly to be feared. Now he knows that God's eye is always upon him; and that, if he were to enter into judgment with him, he could never stand. But he learns also from the gospel, that God in Christ is full of grace, and goodness, and love; so that, "he fears the Lord and his goodness."

The new creature has very different thoughts of *himself*. He once acted as his own master; followed his own wicked will; was ready to excuse his worst actions; thought lightly of his sins; perhaps gloried in his shame. Now he sees the evil of his former ways; he mourns sincerely for his sins; he sees the badness of his heart from whence they flowed; he ranks himself among the chief of sinners; he wonders at his former boldness in sin; and he wonders more at the patience of God, in not cutting him off with some sudden stroke of his judgment. In short, he cries, "Behold, I am vile. I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

The new creature has new thoughts of

the *world*; of the *men* of it, and the *things* of it. Once he loved the company of profane and unclean persons; now he shuns them as he would the plague; and his language is, "Depart from me, ye wicked men, for I will keep the commandments of my God." Before, he hated the very sight of a godly person; now, his heart unites with those who fear the Lord; he thinks them "the excellent of the earth," wishing to live and die with them. How different also are his views of the things of the world! Once they were his only portion. He sighed to be great; he longed to be rich; he panted for pleasure. Eating and drinking, cards and plays, music and dancing, or some other vain amusements, were his dear delight; and to enjoy these he would sacrifice every thing. Now he sees the vanity of them all. He sees their danger. They had led him to the brink of ruin; and now he can truly say,

"These pleasures now no longer please,
No more delight afford:
Far from my heart be joys like these,
Now I have known the Lord!"

But oh, what new apprehensions has he of *Eternity*! He hardly ever used to think of it; now it is almost always on his mind; for now he has that *faith*, which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Now, therefore, he looks not at the things that are seen, for he knows they are temporal; but at the things which are not seen, for they are eternal. He knows that he must live for ever; either in a glorious heaven, or in a dreadful hell. Compared, therefore, with eternal concerns, all worldly things appear as empty shadows, and he considers every thing below according to the relation it bears to his eternal happiness.

The new creature has also very different thoughts of *Jesus Christ* from what he had before. Once he was without form and comeliness to him; now he appears "the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." He did not wish to hear of him, or read of him, or speak of him, except to profane his name: now he can never hear enough of him; for he sees, that if ever he is saved, he owes it all to Jesus; and therefore "counts all things but loss, that he may know him, and win him, and be found in him."

He also thinks very differently of *religious ordinances*. He could not bear to keep the sabbath holy. Either he wholly neglected public worship, and took his carnal pleasure; or if he came, it was a burden: he did not join in prayer; singing, at best, was an amusement; he disregarded

the word preached, perhaps derided it; and, as for private prayer, he hated it. How great the change! Now the sabbath is his delight, "the holy of the Lord and honorable." The house of God is his home; the word of God his food; the Bible his dear companion; and prayer the breath of his soul.

Thus you see what a change has taken place in his *views*; and, if time permitted, we might show that these *new views* are attended with *new affections*; he loves what before he hated; he hates what before he loved. He has new desires, new fears, new joys, and new sorrows. He makes new resolutions. He is employed in new labors. He has new entertainments. He has new hopes and prospects. How justly then is he called a new creature!

Having briefly shown the *nature* of regeneration, let us consider,

II. *The necessity of it.* Observe how very strongly our Lord asserts in the text—"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Surely, these words must have great weight with us, if we believe the God of truth. But you will ask, What is meant by the kingdom of God? I answer, it means the kingdom of grace upon earth, and the kingdom of glory in heaven. Now, without the new birth, no person whatever can see the kingdom of God. It is not said, *he may not, or he shall not*, but he *cannot*; it is impossible in the nature of things.

With respect to the gospel state here, in which Christ reigns, no man can be a *true Christian*, unless he is born again; he cannot be a true member of the church of Christ, or of that society which is governed by Christ; he cannot perform any of the duties required in this kingdom; nor can he enjoy any of the privileges bestowed in it.

He cannot perform any of the *duties*. Fallen man is ignorant of what is truly good. "He calls evil good, and good evil." He is, "to every good work, reprobate," Titus i. 16. And he has a dislike to that which is good. "The carnal mind is enmity against God," and shows its enmity by rebellion against the law of God, Rom. viii. 7. Now, remaining in this state, he cannot answer the end of his being, which is to glorify God; and having this unfitness and unwillingness to answer that end, there is an absolute, an universal necessity for this change. It is "in Christ Jesus we are created to good works." We cannot "pray in the Spirit," till we are "born of the

Spirit;" we cannot "sing with grace in our hearts," till we have grace; we cannot "worship God in the Spirit," while we are in the flesh. A dead sinner cannot present "a living sacrifice." The duties of a natural man are lifeless and selfish; "he cannot serve God spiritually," because he is carnal; nor graciously, for he is corrupt; nor vitally, because he is dead; nor freely, for he is enmity against God; nor delightfully, for his heart is alienated: nor sincerely, for his heart is deceit; nor acceptably, "for he that is in the flesh cannot please God."

In like manner, the unregenerate person cannot enjoy any of the blessed *privileges* of the gospel state. He knows nothing of the joys of salvation. He is a stranger to the peace of the gospel. He has no relish for the sincere milk of the word. He cannot delight in prayer; nor enjoy communion with God, or communion with the saints, for things that are not natural can never be delightful. And this also makes it plain, that

The unrenewed man cannot see the kingdom of *glory*. The new birth does not indeed entitle a person to heaven; but it makes him "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." The unrenewed sinner is shut out from heaven by the unalterable determination of God himself, who has declared, that "nothing which defileth" shall enter that place, and that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

And if you consider what the joys and employments of heaven are, and what the disposition of a sinner is, it will plainly appear that he cannot see the kingdom of God. "The happiness of heaven is holiness; and to talk of being happy without it, is as great nonsense as to talk of being well without health, or being saved without salvation." People are ready to think, if they go to heaven they must be happy; but, without a new nature, a man might be as much out of his element in heaven, as a fish, out of the bottom of the sea, would be in a green meadow, or an ox in the bottom of the sea. Can a wicked man, who now hates the godly, expect to be happy among none but saints? Can he, who cannot keep three hours of the sabbath holy, bear to keep an eternal sabbath? Can he, who now curses and swears, imagine that his tongue shall be for ever employed in praising God? Can he, who now hates to think of God, love to employ his mind in the eternal contemplation of him? No, no. Hell is the sinner's "own place;" there he will have his own company, and, in some measure, his old employments, though

without the pleasure of them; but as to heaven, he can never see it till he be born again.

APPLICATION.

FROM what was first said of the nature of the new birth, let us learn to avoid the common mistake, that baptism is regeneration. It is the sign of it, but not the thing itself. We must "be born of water and of the Spirit," John iii. 5; that is, of the Holy Spirit, whose grace is, to the soul, what water is to the body. Take not the shadow for the substance. Can baptism change the heart? Has it changed *yours*? Say, poor sinner, how is it with you? Conscience will tell you, "Old things are not passed away; all things are not become new." Do any of you live in drunkenness, profaneness, sabbath-breaking, whoredom, or any other sin? Or do you live unconcerned about your soul, careless about salvation, without Christ, without prayer? know for certain, that you are yet a stranger to this great and blessed change. And yet, without it, the God of truth assures you, it is impossible for you to be saved. You must be born again. Do not think that outward reformation, or morality, or religious professions, or religious duties, are sufficient. All these are far short of this inward, spiritual change. You must be born again. As sure as there is a God in heaven, you must be born again, or you can never go to heaven. And can you bear the thought of being shut out? Put the question to yourself. "Can I dwell with everlasting burnings? Can I endure eternal darkness? Can I bear to be eternally separated from the blessed God? Is my present sinful, sensual life to be preferred before eternal joys? Is there one text in the Bible to give me comfort in this state?" O that you may be so deeply convinced of the immediate necessity of this change, that you may, ere you sleep this night, fall down on your knees before God, and earnestly desire him to make you a new creature. He can do it in a moment; and he has promised his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. Say not, as the foolish do, I will not change my religion. Let me ask you a question, Has your religion changed you? If not, it is high time to change it. But do not be deceived by appearances, forms, and names. True religion is not the business of the lip, or the knee, but of the heart. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink," or outward ceremonies; no, but it is within; it consists "in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Be advised also to read and hear his word, for this is the instrument which God employs in effecting this

great change. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

And as for you, who have experienced this blessed change, forget not to give the glory to God, and to take the comfort of it to yourselves. Are you born of God? then heaven is yours. The righteousness of Christ is your *title* to it, but herein is your *fitness* for it. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God: it follows, therefore, that if he be born again, he shall see it.—Thank God for it. You are renewed for this very purpose, that you should show forth his praise. God has made you to differ from the mass of mankind. He has done more for you, than if he had made you kings and emperors; for he has made you sons of God and heirs of glory; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." Often reflect on your former state; and admire the grace that has made the difference. God has given you his Spirit, and, in him, a sure earnest of your heavenly inheritance. "He that wrought for you the self-same thing is God." O, be concerned to live and walk as renewed persons; so shall you prove the reality of the change; adorn the gospel, edify your neighbor, and glorify God.

PRAYER.—ALMIGHTY God, who hast declared in thy holy word, that except a man be born again, he cannot see thy kingdom, give us experimentally to know this great, this inward, this universal change! We confess that we are born in sin, and prone to sin; but we beseech thee, O God, to create in us clean hearts, and renew right spirits within us. May old things pass away, and all things become new! Through the word of thy grace, and the power of thy Holy Spirit, may we become new creatures!—may we die to sin, and live unto righteousness! We have been baptized in the name of Jesus: O grant us not only the visible sign, but also the inward and spiritual grace; that so we may serve thee in this world in newness of life, and hereafter enter into thy heavenly kingdom, through Jesus Christ, our only Savior! Amen.

SERMON VIII.

REPENTANCE.

Mark vi. 12. And they went out, and preached that men should repent.

IT is remarkable, that whatever different notions men have of religion, they all believe that repentance is necessary to salvation. But it may be feared, that many mistake its true nature, and take the shadow for the substance. There are also many, who though they think it necessary, delay their repentance to some future period; and more than a few die without it, and perish in their sins. It is therefore of

great importance, that we should know wherein *true repentance* consists; and that we should be urged ourselves to repent, that we perish not. *That* repentance, then, which is true and genuine, and "needeth not be repented of" will be found to include the four following things:

- I. Conviction of sin.
- II. Contrition for sin.
- III. Confession of sin.
- IV. Conversion from sin.

I. The first thing that belongs to true repentance is a *conviction of sin*, or a clear sight and feeling sense of our sinfulness; without this, there is no repentance, no religion; for the gospel may be justly called "the religion of a sinner;" none but sinners can need mercy or repentance; and Jesus Christ expressly declares, "that he came not to call the righteous," that is, such as the Pharisees, who *thought* themselves righteous, "but sinners to repentance." Now all men are sinners; not the most profane and openly wicked only, but the most moral, religious, and blameless people among us: for "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

The word repentance signifies a *change of mind*, or *after-thought*; a great change in the mind and disposition of a person, especially about himself, as a sinner. For this purpose the Holy Spirit opens his eyes to see the holy law of God, as contained in the Ten Commandments. This law requires of every person love to God, and love to man. It requires us to love God supremely, and our neighbors as ourselves. It requires perfect, constant, unsinning obedience, all our lives long. It does not demand only sincere obedience, doing as well as we can, but doing all, and doing it always; so that if a man fail only in one point, he is thereby made a sinner; the law is broken; the curse follows; and, if he be not pardoned through the blood of Christ, hell must be his portion.

In general, the repenting sinner is first alarmed on account of some great and open sin, if he has committed such; as the woman of Samaria, when Christ charged her with adultery; or as Paul was, when convinced of his murderous persecution of the saints. But conviction will not stop here; it will trace the streams of sin to the spring, namely, that corrupt nature we brought into the world with us. We shall freely confess with David, that "we were born in sin, and in iniquity did our mothers conceive us," Psalm li. 5. We shall acknowledge with Paul, that "in us, that is, in our flesh," our corrupt nature, "there

is no good thing;" but that "every imagination of the thought of our hearts is only evil continually," Gen. vi. 5. The penitent will readily own he has been a rebel against God all his life; that he has indeed "left undone those things which he ought to have done; and done those things which he ought not to have done."

The law of God is spiritual; it reaches to the most secret thoughts, desires, wishes, and purposes of the mind. It forbids and condemns the sins of the heart, as well as those of the lip and the life. A convinced sinner is sensible of heart-sins, thousands and millions of them. He sees that his best duties and services are mingled with sin; even his prayers, and all his religious exercises. He sees that he has, all his life, lived without God in the world, and paid no regard to his will and glory; that he has loved himself, the world, and the creature, far more than God; and that he has been doing all this contrary to light and knowledge; notwithstanding the checks of his conscience, and many resolutions to the contrary, and notwithstanding the mercies and the judgments which God had sent to reclaim him. Wherever there is this conviction, it will be accompanied with contrition.

II. *Contrition*, or a *genuine sorrow for sin*, and pain of heart on account of it. This is that "soft heart," or "heart of flesh," which God has promised to give his people; instead of that "heart of stone, with which we are born, and which has no spiritual feeling."

"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise," Psalm li. 17. Men despise broken things. So the Pharisee despised the broken-hearted publican in the temple; but God did not despise him. So far from it, that he accounts the sorrow and shame of a penitent sinner more valuable than many costly sacrifices of rams and bullocks. A heart that trembles at the word of God; a heart breaking, not in despair, but in humiliation; a heart breaking with itself, and breaking away from sin. So Peter, when duly affected with the sin of denying his master, "went out and wept bitterly;" and Mary Magdalene, sensible of former iniquities, "washed her Savior's feet with her tears."

There is indeed a *false sorrow*, which many mistake for the true. When a person is sick, and fears he shall die, it is not uncommon to hear him say he is sorry for sin; and if God will spare his life, he will amend his ways. But too often, such a one is only sorry that God is so holy, that the

law is so strict, and that he is in danger of being damned for his sins. He is not grieved that he has offended God, his best friend and benefactor, who has followed him with goodness and mercy all his life. But the rottenness of this repentance often appears when the sick person recovers; when the fright is over, he returns to the same carnal course as before. The sorrow is no better than that of some criminals at the gallows; very sorry they are that they have forfeited their lives; but they are not affected with the criminality of their actions. Felix trembled, but did not repent; and Judas was sorry for what he had done, but not in a godly manner. And this shows how very uncertain, for the most part, is the repentance of a dying bed. God forbid we should delay our repentance to that season!

But the sorrow of a true penitent is for *sin*, as committed against a holy and good God. Such was the penitence of David, who says, Psalm li. 4, "Against thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." It is true that he had sinned against his fellow-creatures; against Uriah, and Bethsheba, and Joab, and all Israel: doubtless he lamented this; but what cut him to the heart, was his sin against God; *that* God who had raised him from the sheepfold to the throne; who had saved him from the hand of Saul, and given him his master's house; and if that had been too little, would have given him more; (for thus Nathan the prophet aggravated his sin.) "Against thee, O Lord," said the broken-hearted penitent, "against thee have I sinned." Thus, "the goodness of God led him to repentance." Observe, likewise, the tone of the returning prodigal. "I will arise, and go to my father, and say, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." He might have said, Sir, I have spent my fortune, hurt my health, become a beggar, and am ready to starve; be pleased to relieve me. No; his heart was affected with his sin and his folly. So it is with a repenting sinner. He considers the majesty of that holy being he has offended; the reasonableness of his command, the obligation he has broken through, and especially the base ingratitude of his conduct. Then he will feel the force of those affecting words, Isa. i. 2, 3. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider."

The goodness of God to a sinner, in the way of providence, may well excite this godly sorrow; but, how much more the consideration of redeeming love! What! did God "so love the world of rebel men as to send them his only begotten Son!" And did he send his Son, "not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved!" O love beyond degree, beyond example, beyond expression!

Let the penitent also remember Jesus; the innocent, the amiable, the benevolent Jesus. Jesus, who left his throne of glory, and became a poor and afflicted man. Why was he despised and rejected of men? Why a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? Why had he not a place where to lay his blessed head? Why did he endure the contradiction of sinners? Why was he oppressed and afflicted? Why was the visage so marred more than any man, and his form than the sons of men? I know the reason, may the weeping penitent say, "Surely he has borne my griefs, and carried my sorrows; he was wounded for my transgressions, and bruised for my iniquities."

"'Twere you, my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormenters were;
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear.

"'Twere you that pull'd the vengeance down,
Upon his guiltless head;
Break, break, my heart, O burst mine eyes,
And let my sorrows bleed."

III. *Confession of sin* will also be made by the true penitent. By nature we are rather disposed to conceal, deny, and excuse our sins; to say we are no worse than others; that we could not help committing them; and that we see no great harm in them. But it is not so, where true repentance is found. We shall take the advice that Joshua gave to Achan. "My son, give glory to the Lord, and make confession to him." To hide or deny our sins, is to dishonor God; as if he did not see, or would not punish it; but to confess our sins, is to honor his holy law, which we have broken; to honor his omniscience, which beheld all our crimes; to honor his justice, which might take vengeance upon them; and to honor his patience, which has forbore to strike the fatal blow. And indeed, a frank and free confession of our sins is the best way of finding peace. "While I kept silence, says the Psalmist, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long; but I acknowledge my sin to thee, mine iniquity have I not hid; I said I will confess my transgressions to the Lord, and thou

forgavest the iniquity of my sin." Psalm xxxii. 4, 5.

Secret sins require only secret confession to that God who seeth in secret; but sins that are public and scandalous ought to be more openly acknowledged; that we may undo, as far as we can, the evil committed.

The true penitent is *sincere* in his public confessions. How many call themselves "miserable sinners," declare that "the remembrance of their sins is grievous, and the burden of them intolerable;" and cry, "Lord have mercy upon us, Christ have mercy upon us," without the least sense of evil or burden of iniquity. This is abominable hypocrisy, and adding sin to sin. But the renewed soul is truly sincere in his confessions; he finds the words of Scripture well adapted to his feelings, and can cordially adopt those of Job, "Behold I am vile; I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes;" or the words of the publican, "God be merciful to me, a sinner;" or the words of Paul, who calls himself "the chief of sinners."

We have now considered *Conviction*, *Contrition*, and *Confession*, as three essential ingredients in true repentance; and to these we must add one more.

IV. *Conversion*; which is a forsaking sin, and turning from it to God. John the Baptist, that great preacher of repentance, exhorted his hearers to "bring forth fruits meet for repentance." And thus St. Paul preached both to Jews and Gentiles, "that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance," Acts xxvi. 20. Without this, the most humbling expressions and confessions, the greatest alarms of conscience or floods of tears, will prove insufficient. "Though Cain's terror, Judas's confession, Pharaoh's promises, Ahab's humiliation, Herod's hearing John gladly, and doing many things, were all combined in one man, they would not prove him a real penitent, while the love of one sin remained unmortified in the heart, or the practice of it *allowed* in his life." True repentance is not content to lop off the branches, but "lays the ax at the root of the tree." The devil may suggest that a beloved sin is but a little one, and may be spared; but grace will know, that as one small leak may sink a ship, so one indulged sin may damn a soul. However dear therefore a lust may be, or however hard to be parted with, it must be forsaken. So our Lord directs: "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out; if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off;" that is, if thine eye or thine hand *cause thee to*

offend, or incline thee to sin, turn away thine eye from it, as if thou hadst no eye to see it, or hand to practise it; and be as willing to part with a beloved lust, as a man who has a mortified hand or foot is willing to part with it, to preserve his life. "For it is better to enter into life thus maimed, than having two eyes or two hands, to be cast into hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

You have a fine instance of true repentance in Zaccheus, the converted publican. When Christ and salvation came to his house and heart, he, who had probably been a great sinner, stands and says to the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him four-fold." Here was not only confession of sin, but forsaking it. He, who had been an extortioner, becomes not only honest, but liberal. He makes *restitution*; and so will every true penitent. He will undo what he has done, if possible. Alas, how many evils is it now impossible to undo! Some poor souls are perhaps in hell, to whose destruction our wickedness contributed. But grace will enable us to do what is possible; sin shall not have dominion; and we shall now be as earnest to please and serve God, as once we were to serve the devil.

APPLICATION.

If this be repentance, the great point is, Have we repented? O, let us not deceive ourselves. Jesus Christ, the faithful and true witness, has said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish:"—not come to nothing, or cease to be, (happy would it be for impenitent sinners were that their case!) but they shall "be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Do not mistake. Repentance is universally necessary, for "all have sinned." If it could be proved, that we never committed but one single sin, repentance would be absolutely necessary. One theft, one murder, proved against a man at a human bar is enough to procure his condemnation; so one sin against God is enough to condemn us to eternal misery. But it is not one, it is not ten thousand sins only, that we have to lament; "who can understand his errors?" Listen not to the father of lies; he promised Eve, that eating of the forbidden fruit should do her no harm; but she found, and we all find, the dreadful effects of that first sin. Say not with the wicked man of old, "Who, when he heareth the words of this curse, shall

bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." God forbid; for, mark the consequence,—“The Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against the man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him.” Deut. xxix. 19. Repent, or perish, is the solemn decision of God. “He commandeth all men, everywhere, to repent; and what can be more reasonable? The law which we have broken is “holy, just, and good.” To love him was our most reasonable service; and would have been for our unspeakable benefit. Having then broken it, and by so doing incurred his wrath, and exposed ourselves to ruin, can it be thought unreasonable that we should make an humble submission, and implore his mercy?

Come, then, and be encouraged to instant repentance. He might have cut you off in your sins, without a moment’s warning: but he has given you time and space for repentance. His very command is encouragement. It implies, that “there is forgiveness with him;” pardon of sin and repentance are inseparably connected. “Christ is exalted to give repentance and remission of sins.” “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” Only do not suppose that repentance deserves or merits pardon. Salvation is all of grace; but this is the order appointed of God; for by penitential sorrow, the heart is prepared to receive the mercy of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Let the “goodness of God lead thee to repentance.” He delighteth not in the death of a sinner, but rather rejoiceth in his return. And our Savior assures us, that “there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance.” Arise, sinner, for he calleth thee. Does your heart begin to relent? Are you saying, I will arise, and go to my father? Arise, then, and go at once. He will see thee afar off, and run to meet thee; he waits to be gracious, and there shall be joy in heaven, and joy on earth, upon thy return.

Thousands as vile and base as you have found mercy. Let not Satan say it is too late; the door is open: nor let him say it is too soon. He may say, to-morrow will do. God says, to-day, “while it is called to-day;” then hear his voice. To-morrow

may be too late. “This night may thy soul be required of thee.” Beware of deferring repentance to a dying bed. Will you not then have enough to do, to bear with patience the pain and agonies of dissolving nature? Why should you plant thorns in your dying pillow? Why should you not then have the peace of God, and the joy of the Holy Ghost, to support and comfort your heart? Who can tell but sudden death may be your lot; if not, extreme pain, or a disordered head, may prevent the possibility of repentance. And do not imagine that repentance has any thing in it forbidding. Christ has said, “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” The penitent has more pleasure in his tears, than the worldling in all his gaiety. Besides, if the door be strait, it opens into boundless pleasures; pleasures not confined to time, but which will last to all eternity. God now dwells in the contrite heart; and soon shall every true penitent dwell with him in paradise.

Let those who know what true repentance is, give thanks to him who has graciously bestowed it. Know, my friends, that repentance is not the work of a day, but of a life. The more you know of your own heart, and the more you know of Christ, the more need you will feel of a repenting spirit. “Walk humbly with thy God;” and let the remembrance of forgiven sins keep you low in your own eyes; having received mercy, love much, for much is forgiven; and labor daily to maintain a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men.

“O, how I hate those lusts of mine,
That crucified my God;
Those sins that pierc’d and nail’d his flesh
Fast to the fatal wood!”

“Whilst, with a melting, broken heart,
My murder’d Lord I view,
I’ll raise revenge against my sins,
And slay the murd’ers too.”

PRAYER.—BLESSED God, who hast declared in thy holy word, That if any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his, give unto each of us thy Holy Spirit, that by his teaching “we may have a right judgment in all things, and evermore rejoice in his holy comfort, through the merits of Christ Jesus our Savior, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end!”

May the Holy Spirit enlighten our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and lead us into all truth! May our hearts be purified by his holy influence! and let the joy of the Holy Ghost be our strength and our consolation! May he help our infirmities in prayer, and become, by all his sacred operations the seal of our redemption! Amen.

SERMON IX.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Rom. viii. 9.—Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

NOTWITHSTANDING the various distinctions which subsist among men, there are but two of any real consequence in the sight of God; and these are mentioned by St. Paul just before our text—"They that are after the flesh, and mind the things of the flesh; and they that are after the Spirit, and who mind the things of the Spirit," ver. 5; that is, those people, who, remaining in the state they were born, do habitually consult and relish, pursue, and delight in worldly, sensual, and sinful things; or on the contrary, those who, being born again of the Spirit, are under his guidance and influence; and therefore pursue, regard, and love things that are of a spiritual and heavenly nature. Every person here belongs to one of these classes; and it behoves us seriously to examine to which of them; for on this depends our eternal all. He who is after the flesh, "cannot please God," v. 8; but is in a state of death, v. 6; or, as it is in the text, "is none of Christ's," that is, not a member of his body, not a child in his family, not a subject in his kingdom; and dying in this state, Christ will not own him for his, nor adjudge him to eternal life at the great day. But if by the grace of God, we have the Holy Spirit, and live under his gracious influences, it is a proof that we belong to Christ, and shall obtain eternal glory with him. How necessary is it then that we should be able to decide with certainty on this great question, and to know whether we belong to Christ or not! That we may be able to do this, let us pray to God to assist us, while we

I. Consider who the Spirit of Christ is.

II. Prove that all real Christians have the Spirit of Christ, and show for what purposes; and,

III. Point out the evidence of our state arising from thence.

I. Let us consider who the Spirit of Christ is.

The whole Scripture declares, that "there is but one only living and true God;" but the Scripture clearly shows, that in the unity of the Godhead there are three (whom we call persons:) thus, in 1 John v. 7, "There are three that bear record in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one." They are generally called by the

names Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; which names are not intended to describe their manner of subsistence among themselves (for that is a branch of knowledge above our capacity, and is not revealed;) but the manner of their operations in the covenant of grace. To each of these divine persons particular attributes and works are ascribed, and each of them is expressly called God. The divine person we now speak of is the Holy Spirit; called, in the same verse with our text, "the Spirit of God." That he is properly called a *Person*, appears from the personal properties and works ascribed to him. He is said to have *Understanding*, or *Wisdom*, 1 Cor. ii. 10. Is. ii. 3. He is said to have a *Will*, 1 Cor. xii. 11. He is possessed of *Power*, Job xxxii. 4. He is said to *teach us*, John xiv. 26. 1 John ii. 27, to *lead*—to *guide*—to *convince*—to *renew*—to *speak*—to *show*—to *call*; and *send* ministers. This plainly proves that he is a person, and not merely a quality or property of Deity, as some have vainly pretended.

It is equally evident that he is a *Divine Person*, or truly and properly God, equal with the Father and the Son; for divine perfections are ascribed to him, as *Eternity*—*Omnipresence*—or being everywhere; and *Omniscience*, or knowing all things. The Holy Spirit is expressly called *God*. Ananias is said to lie to the Holy Ghost, Acts v. 3; and in the next verse St. Peter says to him, "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." The same person is intended in both verses, which plainly shows that the Holy Ghost is God. This also appears from the *sin* against the Holy Ghost; if he were not God, would blaspheming him be a sin, an unpardonable sin? But above all, consider the form of baptism. Our Lord commands his apostles to "disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." So likewise in the usual form of benediction: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you." In both these cases, the very same honors are ascribed to the Spirit as are given to the other divine persons; which would be blasphemy, if he were not a divine person, or truly and properly God.

He is called in our text the *Spirit of Christ*, not only because he *proceeded* from Christ, as well as from the Father, but because he was *promised* by Christ, and *sent* by Christ. He was the Spirit of Christ in all the ancient prophets; and he now "testifies of Christ," "takes the things of Christ, and shows them unto us;" in a

word, because the whole salvation of Christ is applied to the heart by his sacred influences. We are now, in the second place, to

II. Prove that all real Christians have the Spirit of Christ, and to show for what purposes they have him. So necessary is this to salvation, that St. Paul declares in our text, that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" that is, he is no Christian.

It is one of the most dangerous errors of this day, to maintain that the influences of the Spirit are not now to be expected, and that they were confined to the days of the apostles, when they had power to work miracles. In consequence of this wicked notion, all that is said of Conversion, Regeneration, and Consolation, is out of date; and poor ignorant souls are lulled asleep in carnal security, contentedly resting in the form of godliness without the power; while they are taught, by their blind leaders, to call all true, vital, and felt religion, nonsense and enthusiasm.

That any of the clergy of the Protestant Episcopal Church in this country, or in England, should thus deny the work of the Spirit, is extremely absurd and inconsistent, because that church strongly maintains the necessity of it in many parts of the Common Prayer Book. In the collects you may recollect these petitions; "Grant unto us thy humble servants, that by thy holy inspiration we may think those things that be good." In another place, "Send the Holy Ghost, and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity." In the Communion service she prays, "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit." Observe also the prayer for the President of the United States, and all others in civil authority; "So replenish them with the grace of thy Holy Spirit, that they may always incline to thy will, and walk in thy way. Endue them plenteously with heavenly gifts," &c. In the XIIIth Article of the Church, it is affirmed, that "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, are not pleasant to God." Every clergyman, at his ordination, is asked by the Bishop this question: "Do you trust that you are moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon you this office?" To which the minister replies, "I trust so." And in the Collect for Whit-Sunday, the Church thus prays—God, who, at this time, didst teach the hearts of thy faithful people, by sending to them the light of thy Holy Spirit; "*Grant us, by the same Spirit, to have a right judgment in all*

things; and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort." Also in the collect for the Sunday after Ascension-day, "We beseech thee, leave us not comfortless; but *send to us thy Holy Ghost to comfort us.*" You see then, my brethren, that the Protestant Episcopal Church strongly maintains the continuance of the work of the Spirit, as necessary to all true ministers and Christians. How then do any affirm, that his influences have ceased 1600 years? But as our faith must not rest on the authority of men, let us search the Scriptures, to prove that the work of the Spirit on the heart is absolutely necessary to true godliness.

We freely grant, indeed, that the *extraordinary gifts* of the Holy Ghost were confined to the first ages. Who now pretends to the gift of tongues, or power of working miracles? We do not plead for infallibility, or knowledge of future events, or ability to know any thing not revealed in the Bible. It is for the *sanctifying influences* of the Spirit we plead. The apostles and first Christians received from the Spirit, not only the miraculous powers just mentioned, but light in their understandings, conviction of sin in their consciences, and faith and love to Christ in their hearts, "They purified their souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit;" they "abounded in hope by the Holy Ghost;" they had "joy in the Holy Ghost;" "the love of God was shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost." Through the same Spirit they "mortified the deeds of the body;" and cried "Abba Father." The Spirit was "the earnest of their heavenly inheritance;" and all their holy tempers, affections, and actions, are called "fruits of the Spirit." Are not all these things as necessary to us as they were to them? Corrupt nature is just the same now as then, and needs the same power to change it. Grace is also just the same now as it was then, and is derived from the same source. This alone is enough to prove the necessity of the Spirit's work.

Observe, also, that our blessed Lord promised that his Spirit should *abide* and *continue* with the church instead of his bodily presence. So he speaks, John xiv. 18, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may *abide with you for ever.*" Observe, he was promised to abide with the church *for ever*; not with the apostles only, for he was to be "given to all who should believe;" and that, not for two or three hundred years, but for ever; all the time of Christ's absence from earth, until he shall come the

second time to judgment. But this will more fully appear by considering the *purposes* for which the Spirit is given.

All men are by nature "dead in trespasses and sins;" dead to God and spiritual things; as a corpse in the grave is dead to the affairs of the world. Now "it is the Spirit that quickeneth," John vi. 63. The word of Christ in the gospel is employed for this end. "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God;" but it is by the Spirit's power that the dead soul is quickened to hear it. The word is brought home to the heart, and is then heard, "not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God." O that the word may now be heard among us in this manner! "There is but one word in Scripture for the air which the body breathes, and for that grace which is the breath of our spiritual life; and therefore, when our blessed Lord breathed upon the apostles, he at the same time explained the meaning of what he did, by saying, "*Receive ye the Holy Ghost*;" and hence it is called *inspiration*, or breathing in; for it is the gracious office of the Holy Ghost to act upon the soul, as breath does on the body.

The Spirit of God is called the "Spirit of truth." No man knows the truth, in a saving manner, but by his teaching. A scholar may know the letter of it, but no human learning can give its true meaning. St. Paul affirms, 1 Cor. ii. 14, "The natural man, (that is, the rational man) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned:" and he says, verse 12, "We have received the Spirit of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God;"—that is, we have been taught and enlightened by him, that we might have a true and saving knowledge of the great and glorious blessings of the gospel; and, indeed, no other teaching is sufficient for the purpose. It is well said in one of the Homilies, "Man's human and worldly wisdom and science is not needful to the understanding of Scripture, but the revelation of the Holy Ghost, who inspired the true meaning unto them that with humility and diligence search therefor." This is great comfort for poor people, who are apt to say, they are no scholars, and therefore, cannot understand the Bible. Pray, my friends, for the Holy Spirit, and you will then understand it better than the most learned man who has not the Spirit.

Again, the Spirit is given to every real Christian to "*reprove, or convince of sin.*"

We are by nature ignorant of God's holy law, and therefore of sin, which is the transgression of the law. We are "alive without the law," as St. Paul once was; and when the commandment comes home to the conscience by the power of the blessed Spirit, then we are deeply sensible of our lost and ruined condition; of the sins of our life; sins of omission as well as of commission; of the sins of our heart; and of the sin of our nature; but the Holy Spirit convinces us especially of the great sin of unbelief, in rejecting Christ, and neglecting his precious salvation.

Again, it is by the power of the Spirit, that we are enabled to believe to the saving of the soul. If we see the *need* of salvation, it is by his grace. If we see the *way* of salvation, it is by his teaching. If we are made willing to be saved in that way, it is by his power. Faith is the gift of God. We believe by the operation of the Spirit. And indeed it is a great thing to believe; to receive cordially the whole testimony of God concerning Jesus Christ. In the view of our sin and misery, as children of wrath, to believe that Christ *can* and *will* save us. With a heavy burden of guilt on the conscience, to cast that burden on the Lord, and to find rest for our souls. To renounce our own works and merits, and trust alone to the righteousness of Christ. This is a great work; a work that none can perform but by the "Spirit of faith."

The Spirit of Christ is also called "the Spirit of holiness;" for he is the author of that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Believers are "chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." Regeneration is the beginning of a new and spiritual life. Sanctification is a work of the Spirit in preserving and increasing that life. All true Christians are *saints*, as you may see in several of the Epistles which were written to the saints: and though through the folly and wickedness of many, that name is become a term of reproach, let all men know, that if we are not saints we cannot be saved.

Another purpose for which believers have the Spirit, is to assist them in all religious duties. "Without me, said Christ, ye can do nothing:" and St. Paul says, "We are not sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God;" that is, we have it by actual supplies of the Holy Ghost. Christ is present by his Spirit, "Wherever two or three are gathered together in his name;" and if they get a blessing under

the word preached, or in singing psalms or hymns, or in prayer, it is entirely from the influence of the Holy Ghost. He is said, Rom. viii. 28, to "help our infirmities in prayer;" and we read also of "praying in the Spirit, and of singing in the Spirit."

The Holy Ghost is also given to believers as a *Comforter*. Under this pleasing name Jesus Christ promised to send him to his sorrowful disciples, and said he should always abide in the church as a comforter. Blessed be God, there is comfort in religion. The ways of God are pleasantness and peace, and none will deny it, but those who have never tried them. True happiness is found only in the way of faith, love, and obedience. The knowledge of sin forgiven; peace of conscience through the blood of Christ; a good hope through grace; victory over the fear of death;—are not these comfortable and blessed things? What can the world, or sin, propose of equal value? Well, all these are from the gracious and powerful influences of the Spirit; and this leads us to the last thing proposed.

III. The evidence of our state, as it arises from having or not having the Spirit. Our text says, that "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," consequently is in a dreadful condition; and dying so, must perish for ever without remedy. But the words imply a glorious truth, namely, that some persons do belong to Christ. Yes, they are his dear people, by the gift of the Father, by the purchase of his blood, and by the power of his Spirit, whereby they gave themselves up to him.

Having the Spirit, in the manner and for the purposes we have heard, is the grand proof of being in a state of salvation. This is called the *Seal*, 2 Cor. i. 22; Eph. i. 13. iv. 30. Valuable things are sealed, for the security of them, and to denote whose property they are. Thus are believers sealed. God has given them his Spirit; he dwells in their souls; he quickens them; he enlightens them; he convinces them of sin; he enables them to believe in Christ; he sanctifies them; he helps them to pray; he comforts their hearts. This is God's seal. It cannot be counterfeited. "There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," and who prove they are in him by "walking after the Spirit." To be spiritually minded is life and peace. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Whoever has the Spirit has the sure *earnest* of heaven, 2 Cor. i. 22. Eph. i. 14; he becomes "a joint heir with Jesus Christ; he has the *first fruits* of the

Spirit;" and both soul and body shall certainly be made happy for ever in the eternal world.

APPLICATION.

AND now, dear immortals, what do you think of these things? Seeing that having the Spirit of God determines our state, how is it with you? Have *you* the Spirit? It may be known. It ought to be known; for our all depends upon it. Heaven is ours, if we have the Spirit. Hell will be ours, if we die without him. Recollect a moment what has been said, and pray with David, "Search me, O Lord, and try my heart." You have heard for what purposes every believer receives the Spirit. He quickens the dead soul. Has he quickened you? Are you alive to God, or are you alive to sin and the world? He enlightens the mind in the truth. Do you know, distinguish, and love the truth of the gospel, or do you despise and hate it? He convinces of sin. Are you convinced and humbled for your iniquity? or do you make light of it—perhaps boast of it? He is the author of faith. Do you believe in Jesus, or do you neglect his salvation? He sanctifies the soul. Is your soul sanctified by his grace, or are you wallowing in the filth of sin? He helps the true Christian to pray. Do you know any thing of his gracious help in prayer, or do you live without prayer, or which is nearly as bad, content yourself with a lifeless form of bare words without the heart? The Spirit of God is a Comforter. Is your comfort or pleasure derived from him, or from the vanities and vices of the world? May the Lord enable you to give a serious and honest answer to these inquiries! If, as it may be feared, some of you are without the Spirit, what is your case? You belong not to Christ; you are none of his. Tremble at the dreadful thought. Die you must; and you must come to judgment too. When you see him on the awful throne, O how you will wish to belong to him, and to be owned by him! O, then, be persuaded this moment to lift up your heart to God, and say, Merciful God, give me thy Holy Spirit? He has promised to give him to those who ask. This blessed gift may yet be yours, and shall, if you sincerely desire it. "Ask then, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and the door shall be opened." God Almighty, in compassion to your souls, enable you to do this.

And as to those who have obtained this greatest of blessings, who have the Holy Spirit, what more can be said to you? Survey the wondrous gift with grateful

acknowledgment. What has God wrought! Deny not, from false humility, the heavenly benefit. Have you experienced those sacred effects of the Spirit, which have been so frequently mentioned; here then is the broad seal of the Majesty of heaven, securing your relation to Christ, and your title to mansions of glory. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; and having received the Spirit, take care to "walk in the Spirit;" be careful not to "grieve the Spirit;" and be concerned to bring forth "the fruits of the Spirit," which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God.—Amen.

PRAYER.—O Most holy Lord God, against whom we have greatly sinned, and who for our sins art most justly displeased,—thou hast revealed thy wrath against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,—thou hast also declared, That, except we repent, we shall certainly perish; bestow upon us, we humbly beseech thee, the grace of repentance. Take away the unfeeling heart of stone, and give soft and feeling hearts. Convince us of our sins;—may we feel genuine sorrow on account of them! Enable us to confess them with humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient hearts; and may we bring forth fruits meet for repentance, by turning every one from his wicked way, and hereafter living a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy name! Amen.

SERMON X.

HOLINESS.

Heb. xii. 14. Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

"**HOLY**, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty!" This is the language of saints and angels in their solemn worship. Yes: the God who made us; the God who rules us; the God who will judge us; is most holy. "Who is like unto him, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" the due consideration of God's holiness will make us serious at all times, and especially when we consider our own unholiness. Well may each of us adopt the words of the prophet Isaiah, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips; and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."—"Who can stand before this holy Lord God?"

When God created man, he made him holy. God created man in his own image, which image was holiness; for this is the peculiar character of God. But man soon lost the glory of his nature by sin. He became an unholy being; and God, who is of "purer eyes than to behold evil, and who cannot look upon iniquity," banished

him from paradise; for sin broke off the happy intimacy that before subsisted. As there can be no communion between light and darkness, so there can be no communion between a holy God and an unholy sinner. And this is the reason of what is affirmed in our text, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." To "see the Lord," is a description of the happiness of heaven, where all his divine perfections will be displayed, to the admiration and delight of all the redeemed; but we cannot see him without holiness. Now God, who made man holy at first, has graciously contrived to make him holy again. This is a chief part of his great salvation; for by the blood of Christ the guilt of sin is taken away from believers; and by the Spirit of Christ they are born again, and made new creatures; that is, they are made holy, and so made meet for heaven, which is seeing God. "The pure in heart shall see God."

Our business at this time is,

I. To show what holiness is,

II. To prove the necessity of holiness; and,

III. To point out the means of holiness.

I. Let us consider the nature of true holiness.—Briefly, Holiness is the image of God restored in the soul; or, in other words, "Holiness is that purity of a man, in his nature, inclinations, and actions, which is an imitation and expression of the divine image."

Observe here, holiness is *purity*; the contrary of that horrid defilement sin has produced in the soul of man. There are two things in sin, the *guilt* of it, and the *defilement* of it. By the guilt of it, we are liable to eternal punishment; by the defilement of it, we are made unfit to serve or enjoy God. Guilt makes us afraid. Defilement makes us ashamed. Thus Adam had both guilt and fear upon his first sin. Now, in the salvation of Jesus Christ, God has provided for taking both these away from us. The guilt of sin is wholly removed from those who believe by the blood of Christ, which made atonement for it. The filth of sin is removed, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, in all those who are born again.

The purity we speak of is the purity of the heart, or nature. It is not enough that the outward actions are not impure; there can be no true holiness till the heart is purified. Now many people overlook this entirely. They think it enough, if they are *goodivers*, as they call it, or do good works. This was the fatal mistake of the Pharisees, so severely exposed by

our blessed Lord. They were very particular about meats and drinks, and washing every thing, to prevent defilement; but he charges them with washing the outside only, and taking no care of the heart: they drew nigh to God with the mouth, but their heart was far from him. Their inward part was very wickedness; they were like white-washed tombs, beautiful without, but full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Our Lord therefore insisted upon the necessity of being born again; or being partaker of a new and divine nature. Believers are "born from above," "born of God;" and as every child partakes of the same nature with his father, so do the new-born sons of God; they "put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts; they are renewed in the spirit of their minds, and put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." Eph. iv. 22—24.

The heart being thus renewed, there must of course be new dispositions and inclinations. Every nature has its proper desires and inclinations. Those of the Christian are holy, in conformity to the will of God. The alteration that grace makes is strikingly represented by the prophet Isaiah, in the 11th chapter:—"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb; and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the cow, and the bear, shall lie down and feed together;"—that is, wicked men, however fierce, shall be so altered by the efficacy of the gospel and grace of Christ, that they shall become meek, and gentle, and loving, even to the weakest Christians. Brethren, have you experienced any change of this sort? And what must we think of persecutors, who despise religion? who hate and hurt serious people? Surely these are still lions and wolves, and cannot be esteemed the sheep of Christ. O that such may know what it is to be born again!

Let us now consider briefly, what are the prevailing dispositions and inclinations of holy persons.

They are under the habitual influence of the *fear of God*—not the fear of a slave, but the fear of a child. God has put his fear into their hearts; so that, instead of living without him, and contrary to him, as once they did, they are in the fear of God all the day long. They know that his eye is upon them; they set him always before them, and their desire is, to please and glorify him in all they think, and speak, and do.

Again, They are *humble*. Humility is the root of all other graces, and the only soil in which they will grow. They know themselves; they know the plague of their own hearts; they are conscious of innumerable sins, to which the world are strangers. The remembrance of sins committed in their carnal state, covers them with shame; and the sense of much remaining corruption keeps them low in their own eyes; so that they not only lie in the dust before God, but they are kept from despising their neighbor. If they differ from the worst of mankind, they remember that grace alone made them to differ. Thus, being converted, they receive the kingdom of heaven as little children, and learn to live constantly dependent on the wisdom, grace, and power of their heavenly Father.

Once more, Holy persons are *spiritual* and *heavenly-minded*; for "to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Faith hath led them to regard future and eternal things far above the vanities of time; for that faith by which they now live, is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen. "That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit." Their minds are disposed to prefer spiritual to carnal things. When engaged in spiritual duties, they are in their element; and, at times, can look down with becoming indifference on all the trifles of time. Their "conversation is in heaven." By the cross of Christ "the world is crucified to them;" that is, they are no more delighted with the world, than a good man would be with the rotten carcass of a malefactor; and they likewise are "crucified to the world;" the world can act upon them with no greater efficacy, than the objects of sense upon a dead person.

But, above all, *Love* is the grand prevailing disposition of holy persons. Without love, all attainments and professions are vain. God says, "My son, give me thine heart;" and the believer replies—

"Take my poor heart, and let it be
"For ever clos'd to all but thee."

God appears infinitely lovely to all true believers. His love in Christ Jesus is strongly attractive. They love him, because he first loved them. Having a good hope through grace that God for Christ's sake has pardoned their sins, accepted their persons, and that he will bring them to glory, they feel themselves constrained to depart from iniquity, which they know he hates, and to practise holiness, which they know he loves. Hence his people, his

word, his day, his cause, become their delight; and to glorify him is the new end of their being. This leads us further to observe, that the *actions* of such persons must needs be holy also; their nature being renewed, and their dispositions sanctified.

They become holy in all manner of conversation and godliness. It would be infamous hypocrisy in a man to profess that his heart is holy, if his life is immoral. Morality there may be without holiness; but there can be no holiness without morality. The law of God being written on the heart, and the love of God shed abroad in it, obedience will become easy and pleasant. Christ's yoke is easy, and his burden is light. But here is a large field, which we can but just enter upon.

Good works, properly so called, must be done from a *right principle*; that is, the new nature, or grace of the Spirit in a believer: they must be done according to a *right rule*, which is the word of God; and they must be done to a *right end*; and that is to glorify God. O how few works are truly good, if tried by these rules!

Holiness comprehends all the duties we owe to God; these must be regarded in the *first place*: whereas many people leave them entirely out of their account. What is more common than to hear ignorant persons comfort themselves against the fears of death, by their having been honest, and having paid every one his own? To such people we may put the question that a minister once put to such a person on a dying bed—"But have you paid God what you owed him?" Alas, we owe God our hearts, our love, our obedience; but how many have forgot God; lived without God; and rebelled against God all their lives! But a holy man has a steady regard to the word, will, and glory of God, in all his ways.

Nor will our neighbor be forgotten. Religion does not consist entirely in praying and worshipping God; the holy man brings religion into all his concerns; according to that ancient promise, Zech. xiv. 20. "In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses, *Holiness unto the Lord*;" that is, Holiness shall not be confined to priests and temples; it shall be brought into common life, and all the concerns of it be managed to the glory of God. It is a great truth, "that to be *really* holy, is to be *relatively* holy." Holiness will make good husbands and wives; good parents and children; good masters and mistresses; good tradesmen; good servants; and good subjects. It *will* do this. It actually does it, to the astonishment of all who observe

it; and this is the best way that people can take to promote the gospel, and to make their neighbors like it. Thus must every believer become a practical preacher, "holding forth the word of life." Our "light must shine before men," and then, "they, seeing our good works, will glorify our Father which is in heaven." This is a short account of real holiness; let us now proceed,

II. To prove the *necessity of holiness*: our text declares, that "without it no man shall see the Lord." The whole Scripture testifies to the same truth. And surely it must be evident, in a moment, to every considerate person, for it is a part of our salvation; and to talk of being saved without holiness, is as absurd as to speak of being saved without salvation. Jesus Christ came to save us *from our sins*, not to save us *in* them. To be saved from the guilt of sin, or be pardoned, is but half our salvation; Jesus Christ equally designed by his death to "redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." Christ, therefore, cannot, will not, be divided; we must have the whole of his salvation, or none of it. Let none therefore dream of salvation, while the love and practice of sin is voluntarily continued.

Besides, *the command of God* shows the necessity of holiness. What is the language of the law? "I am the Lord your God, ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy, for I am holy:" and it is the language of the holy gospel too. To show the eternal force and propriety of this reason, it is transferred to the New Testament, where St. Peter saith, "As he who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." The same "gospel that brings salvation teaches us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts; and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

Again, *The electing love of God* proves the necessity of holiness. Did God choose from all eternity those whom he will finally glorify? Yes; but for what purpose? "That they should be holy," Eph. i. 4. Did he predestinate them to eternal life? Yes, and for this end, "that they should be conformed to the image of his Son." Rom. viii. 29. And accordingly, such persons are exhorted by St. Paul, Col. iii. 12, to "put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness," &c. These things become them, and are required of them, on account of their interest in the electing love of God.

Above all, *the nature of God*, who is himself infinite holiness, and *the nature of heaven*, which consists in the sight, service, and enjoyment of God, make it absolutely necessary that we should be holy; for "without this," as our text affirms; "no man shall see the Lord." *No man*; be he whom he may. Whether high or low; rich or poor; learned or ignorant; esteemed or disesteemed of men. *No man*; whatever his knowledge or religion may be, or however high his profession; whether he boasts of his virtue, or his creed, of his works, or his prayers—all, all is in vain without holiness. Let no man then deceive himself with vain words: the God of heaven has decreed that the unholy man shall not enter into his kingdom.

Indeed, it is most certain that heaven itself would be a hell to the wicked. The natural man well knows and must confess he has no relish for any thing heavenly. His pleasures are sensual and worldly. His delight is in folly, and vanity, and sin. The wicked of the earth are his chosen companions. He hates and persecutes the godly; despises them because they are saints; perhaps disturbs their worship, and injures their persons. Prayer and praise, reading and hearing the word of God, are dull and melancholy things. The sabbath itself is a burden. How then can an unholy soul go to heaven? It is impossible in the nature of things, and doubly impossible by the decree of God. Much more might be said, to show the necessity of holiness; but surely enough has been said to satisfy every reasonable person. May we not hope that some are now saying, yes, it is plain enough. God has said it, and I believe it. I believe it for myself, and I am now ready to inquire, how may I, who am an unholy creature by nature and by practice, become holy? We shall gladly answer so necessary an inquiry, for this is the last thing proposed, namely,

III. *The means* whereby we may become holy.

And here it is necessary to observe, that no person in a natural state can arrive at true holiness by his own power or exertions. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh!" Nothing more, nothing better, nor ever will be. Till we are born again; till we believe in Christ; till we are united to him; we can never be holy in the least degree. The shadow and resemblance of holiness there may be, in morality and virtue; but all the true holiness that ever was in the world, or ever will be in it, is as much from Christ, as all the light we have is from the sun. In vain therefore do poor

ignorant souls labor for very vanity, in fasting, praying, penances, &c. &c. while they forget Christ. Equally wrong is their notion, who think they must not be indebted to Christ for pardon, but to their own good endeavors for holiness: the language of the true Christian is, "Surely in the Lord Jesus have I *righteousness* and *strength*."

Know, therefore, my friends, that as the sin of our nature was derived to us from Adam, the first man, so all the holiness of our new nature must be derived to us from Jesus Christ, the second Adam; that "as we have borne the image of the earthly, we may also bear the image of the heavenly." Now, blessed be God, there is fullness of grace in Christ for his whole church; of which church are we, if enabled by faith to receive Christ, and out of his fullness receive grace for grace.

Faith is that grace, which God has appointed as the means of our becoming holy. People have a very wrong notion of faith, who think it an enemy of holiness, or good works. If we look into the Scripture, we shall find that the hearts of the vilest heathens were "purified by faith in Christ," Acts xv. 9; and "sanctified by faith," Acts xxvi. 18. The faith that brings the convinced sinner to Christ, for salvation, receives from him, as it were, pardon with one hand, and holiness with the other; both being equally the design of Christ in his mediatorial work, and equally the desire of every new-born soul.

Observe, likewise, that *the comforts of the gospel*, such as assurance of God's love and pardon of our sins; peace of conscience; joy in the Holy Ghost; and the hope of glory; have a wonderful tendency to promote our holiness.

For the same purpose we must diligently *read our Bibles*; frequently *hear* the preached gospel; and especially abound in *prayer*. These are properly called *Means of grace*; and though they have no power in themselves to make us holy, yet they are appointed of God for our use; he has graciously promised to bless them; and in the diligent use of them every grace of the Spirit is exercised, and by exercise increased. Thus a sense of the evil of sin, and of the beauty of holiness, is kept up; and thus, especially are our souls led out of themselves, in direct acts of faith, to Jesus, and so enabled to receive daily supplies of grace for our growth in holiness, even "grace for grace."

APPLICATION.

AND is this holiness? O, my friends, where is it to be found? O how little is it

to be seen in our world! Yet this is indeed that image of God in which every true Christian is renewed, and without which a person is yet in his sins, and dying so must perish for ever.

And does not this alarm the careless sinner, who daily indulges the love and practice of sin? say, dying fellow-creature, is not thy heart as far from this holiness as the east is from the west? You know it is. And what must be the consequence? Dost thou not believe the God of truth, that this unholiness must shut you out of heaven? Has it not been clearly proved that such as you cannot be admitted there? Your own heart allows that it is impossible.

But surely you are not willing matters should remain thus. Does a desire arise in your heart, O that I were holy! Well, blessed be God for such a desire. Know, my friends, that all are alike by nature. If any here are made holy, sovereign grace made them so. Do you begin to cry, What must I do? We answer, first look to Christ for the pardon of your sins; and then, for the purity of your heart. You must not first strive to make yourselves better, and then think you may come to him with better hope of salvation; but come *now*, come *just as you are*, and the Friend of sinners will receive you.

The same direction may be useful to those, who are seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness; who mourn over remaining corruption, and long for the image of God. Look to Jesus for it. Remember that, by virtue of union to Christ, you may, by faith, derive daily grace from him through the power of the Holy Spirit. "Without him you can do nothing;" but "his grace is sufficient" for all things. In the exercise of constant faith, and in the diligent use of all appointed means, expect the supplies of the Spirit: believing, assuredly, that he who has begun the good work in you, will carry it on, till made meet for the heavenly inheritance.

PRAYER.—HOLY, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, thou hast said unto us, "Be ye holy, for I am holy!" But we confess, with shame and grief, that we are by nature and practice unholy and impure in thy sight. We have reason to abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes;—we have cause to say "Woe be to us, for we are unclean!" Our guilt makes us afraid,—our defilement makes us ashamed; but, O grant, of thy infinite mercy, that our guilt may be removed, through faith in the blood of Christ, and our filth taken away by the grace of thy Holy Spirit! Put thy fear into our hearts.—Make us humble, spiritual, and heavenly-minded; and may the love of Christ constrain us to depart from all iniquity, that so we may faithfully serve thee in the pres-

ent world, as a people redeemed from their vain conversation, zealous of good works; and finally be admitted into the realms of perfect purity and happiness, where we shall see Jesus as he is, and be for ever with and like our holy Lord!

SERMON XI.

DEATH AND JUDGMENT.

Heb. ix. 27. It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the Judgment.

It is recorded of Philip, king of Macedonia, that he ordered one of his pages to come every morning to his chamber door, and cry aloud,—“Philip, remember thou art mortal!” How much the conduct of this heathen prince shames numbers of people called Christians! who, instead of keeping their mortality in mind, do all in their power to forget it. This discourse is intended to call your serious attention to what so much concerns you. Like Moses therefore we say, “O that you were wise, that you understood this, that you would consider your latter end!” May you be led to pray, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.”

Our first business at this time is with DEATH. There is something solemn in the very name! but, O, who can tell what death is? None of our relations or neighbors return from the grave to inform us; we must learn its nature, its cause, and its consequences, from the faithful word of God. We may indeed see something of it in our dying friends. We may see the hasty progress of some fatal disease. The pains, the groans, the agonies of the dying, we have observed. We have seen many a man cut down in the midst of life; hearty, strong, and cheerful, one week; the next, a pale, cold, lifeless corpse, lying in his coffin, and carried to the churchyard. Others we have seen, or heard of, cut off without a moment's warning; perfectly well one moment, the next in eternity. How true is the Scripture, “All flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field; in the morning it flourisheth, in the evening it is cut down and withered.” How frail is man! At “his best estate he is altogether vanity.” He is crushed sooner than the moth.

What awful separations does death make! It removes us at once from our nearest relations and dearest friends. We shut our eyes to all the world: “we shall see man no more in the land of the living.” Death puts a sudden period to all our projects, good or bad; “in that very day our

thoughts perish." It deprives the great of all their pomp and power, and the rich of all their possessions, for man "bringeth nothing with him into this world, and it is certain he can carry nothing out."

Death is *universal*. Other evils are partial. But all men die; "for what man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?" Death has reigned in all ages; and though in early times some men lived many hundred years, yet they all died at last. Death reigns in all countries: as certainly as the tide ebbs and flows, so "one generation passeth away, and another cometh." This is "the way of all flesh." "The grave is the house appointed for all living." There is no discharge in this war. "We must needs die."

Death is in itself awful! The fear of death; the agonies of death: the ghastly appearance of the dead; the sad change that takes place in the body, which renders it offensive, and obliges us to bury it out of our sight; the coffin, the shroud, the cold grave, the crawling worms, the sordid dust—all these are terrible things to nature. But what makes death a thousand times more terrible is, that it is *the effect of God's anger*. Had there been no sin, there had been no death. God, to keep Adam from sin, threatened him with death; but Satan, the father of lies, said he should not die. He ventured on the forbidden fruit, and so, by his sin, "death came into the world, and hath passed upon all" his children in every succeeding age. Death, then, is "the wages of sin;" and carries with it the most awful marks of God's anger. This is justly called by St. Paul the *sting* of death: "the sting of death is sin." It is the consciousness of guilt, and the just dread of future misery, which makes death so very dreadful. Poor thoughtless mortals, neglecting to regard the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, which brings a sovereign remedy, an antidote to death, are unwilling to think of it: they put off as much as possible the evil day: but did they know the love of Christ in dying to disarm death of its sting; did they consider, that, by faith in Jesus, all the danger of death may be avoided; they would sit down and look death in the face; and wisely consider how they may meet, with safety and pleasure, what they can never avoid.

For let it be remembered, that the death of each of us here present, is absolutely certain. Our text says, "*it is appointed*:" it is the firm decree of God, which cannot be reversed. It is the unalterable law of God, a law which no sinner can transgress:

other laws of God are trampled under feet, but this *must* be obeyed. We know not *when*, or *how*, we shall die: but we are sure that we *must* die. Whether we are high or low; rich or poor; male or female; young or old; "it is appointed for us once to die." Possibly, when death comes, we may be very unfit to die; very unwilling to die; but death will not delay on that account: ready or unready, when the hour comes, we must submit. It is said of the wicked—"he is *driven away* in his wickedness"—*suddenly* perhaps; at least *unexpectedly*. It was when "the rich fool" talked of many years to come, that God said to him, "this night shall thy soul be required of thee;" often *violently* dragged to the grave like a malefactor to the gallows. O what would some great and rich sinners have given for a few weeks, or a few hours of life, if money could have bought them: but death will not be bribed: go the sinner must, "although the physicians help, friends groan, the wife and children weep, and the man himself use his utmost endeavors to retain the spirit; his soul is required of him; yield he must, and go where he shall never more see the light."

Here let us stop a moment, and apply to ourselves what has already been said.

Is life so short? Then why should we waste it? Why should we make it shorter by our sin and folly? How much of our precious time is entirely lost! What shall we think of sports and pastimes, cards, and plays, and dancing, which are expressly intended to *kill time*?—To *kill time*! Shocking expression to the ears of a Christian! O, had you heard what some dying sinners have said of their murdered time, when time with them was nearly over, you would dread the thought of killing time; rather would you study how to "redeem time," and obey the direction of the wise man, Eccl. ix. 10. "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work, no device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest." Particularly be careful to improve holy time, I mean the Lord's day: the day which the Lord has graciously appointed for your spiritual improvement. The abuse of this day is one of the greatest sources of sin and infidelity; and the recollection of the neglect of it is often dreadfully painful to dying people. Be exhorted then diligently to regard the means of grace on this day, and improve every sabbath as the most precious portion of a short life.

Is death certain? Will it surely come,

and you know not how soon? Then let it be your first business to prepare for it. This is our Lord's advice; "Be ye also ready, for ye know not when the Son of Man cometh." It is appointed unto men *once* to die, once only; now that which can be done but once should be well done; especially as our eternal all depends upon it. As the tree falls so it lies; as death leaves us judgment finds us; if an error happens here, it can never be remedied. Surely then it is the highest wisdom of man to prepare for this great change. Do you ask what it is to be prepared? I answer, it is to have your sins pardoned, and your soul sanctified; for "sin is the sting of death;" if your sins are pardoned, you need not fear to die; and if your soul is sanctified by grace, death will be your gain. This then is your great concern, your immediate business. Fly, instantly fly, to the Savior's arms. He died that we might live. His blood cleanseth from all sin. He will wash every soul from sin who applies to him for that purpose; and, at the same time, bestow his Holy Spirit to sanctify the soul, and make it meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Happy for those who are in this blessed state; they may say, "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; or whether we die, we die unto the Lord; so that living and dying we are the Lord's." God grant this may be the happy condition of us all.

Let us now proceed to the *second* part of this great subject, namely ETERNAL JUDGMENT; "after death the judgment."

Immediately after death, it is presumed, the soul, separated from the body, appears before God; and by a private, particular, and personal judgment, receives the sentence of eternal life, or eternal death. The Scripture abundantly shows, that the soul subsists in a separate state from the body. Our Lord promised the dying thief that he should be with him, on the very day of his death, in Paradise; and St. Paul longed to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord; accounting it far better than the highest state of privilege or usefulness in the church.

But the accounts we have in the Scripture of the judgment refer to the *great day*, when the dead shall be raised from their graves, when small and great shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ. The glory and grandeur of this day will be far beyond the power of language to express. "The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised." "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven in

flaming fire, with his mighty angels." "The Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him: then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats.

Reason itself must allow the necessity of a future judgment. At present, we often see the wicked prosper, while good men are much afflicted. How many murderers, oppressors, and persecutors, escape punishment! But it is inconsistent with the justice of God that it should always be so. "He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, when all men shall give an account of what they have done in the body, whether it be good or bad." Even now *conscience* testifies to the future judgment, by passing a private sentence on all our actions; and summoning us to appear at the bar of God, to answer for them.

To show how justly and righteously every thing will be done on that occasion, it is said, Rev. xx. 12, "The books were opened, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

The *law* will be opened. The commandments of God are the rule of men's actions; and are any "of the works of the law?" Do they seek righteousness by their doings? Let them now appeal to the Searcher of hearts, that they never broke this law in thought, word, or deed; but loved and served God perfectly, without sin, all their lives; then may they claim life by the law; but this is impossible. No man living will be justified in this manner; but the law will for ever condemn all who have broken it, yet have neglected the great salvation revealed.

The book of the *gospel*. In this blessed book "the law of faith" is revealed; "the righteousness of God by faith is revealed to faith;" it is declared, that he that believeth in Jesus shall be saved; and happy will it be for those who are found true believers, who, having known their ruined and helpless state by the law, have fled for refuge to the grace of the gospel, and believing in Jesus for righteousness, are "found in him."

Beside these, the book of God's remembrance will be opened. God, who knows all our actions, and all our secret thoughts, records them in his book. Nothing done by man, whether good or bad, is forgotten; for it is written, that "he will bring every secret thing into judgment," and "that

for every idle word that men speak, they shall render an account."

Exactly agreeing with this will be the book of *conscience*, which shall also be opened; or, in plainer words, every man shall stand convicted in his own conscience, that he is guilty of every charge brought against him by the law. At present sinners take little notice of their sins; and if they feel a little remorse of conscience, soon forget it; but at the great day they will all rush upon their memory. Conscience shall serve instead of a thousand witnesses; and, as the Scripture speaks, "every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God."

But blessed be God, there will be one more book opened, and that is, *the book of life*, containing a list of all the names of the people of God; even of those who were chosen by the Father to salvation; redeemed by the blood of Christ; and who were called, renewed, and sanctified, by the Holy Spirit. Here will be found the names of those people who were convinced of their sin and misery, humbled on account of their abominations, and who, being enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, came to him by precious faith, for life and salvation; and who proved the truth of their faith, by the holiness of their lives and conversation.

Now hear, from the word of God, what will be the *sentences* pronounced on the assembled world, at that awful period. When a poor criminal at the assizes is tried for his life, what a solemn moment is that, when, silence being demanded by an officer of the court, every voice is hushed, and every eye is fixed on the Judge! Each of us shall then become not a spectator of another's trial, but an expectant of our own sentence; that sentence which shall fix, beyond the possibility of an alteration, our happy, or our miserable doom.

Now hearken! Matt. xxiv. 34, "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink," &c. &c. Let us take care, my friends, to understand this aright; for many have sadly mistaken it. We are not to imagine, that such good works as are here mentioned merit heaven; this is not only contrary to the whole gospel, but contrary also to the meaning of this place. You are to observe, that the judgment here represented is of professors of the gospel: all the persons here spoken of, both at the right and left

hand of Christ, are such as were called by his name, and professed to be believers in him; and when it is said they are judged *according to their works*, it means according to the evidence of their works: that is, whether the faith they pretended to, have brought forth good works, or not. The sentence passed is not *for their works*, nor *for their faith* neither. The kingdom they receive is not their *wages*, but their *inheritance*; not merited, as it were, yesterday, but "prepared for them, before the foundation of the world;" and they were prepared for it, not by their works, but by the grace of God, which united them to Christ, led them to believe, and enabled them to bring forth the fruits here mentioned, namely, works of love to the saints, not mere works of humanity; but of love to the poor despised saints of God, because they belonged to Jesus. These happy persons you see had no proud thoughts of the merit of their actions, for they humbly cry, "Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and gave thee meat?"

But O how awful is the other sentence! "Then shall he say unto them on the left hand, *Depart, ye cursed*, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels!" O what a word is that—"Depart." What! depart from Christ? Depart from the fountain of all happiness? It will be to the condemned sinner the most dreadful word that ever sounded in his ears: and yet how dreadfully just! for it will be said to that sinner, who, in his heart, has said a thousand times to Christ, "Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways."

This sentence will be pronounced against those professors of religion, whose pretended faith did not produce the fruits of love to the saints. Sins of *omission* only are here mentioned! neglecting to help and relieve the poor and afflicted members of Christ. And if this will be sufficient ground of condemnation, what think ye will be the lot of persecutors, who, instead of feeding, clothing and visiting the members of Christ, robbed them of their food, raiment, liberty, and life? What will be the portion of drunkards, swearers, whoremongers, sabbath-breakers, and the whole herd of profane and vicious sinners? Such, we are elsewhere assured, shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven, but must have their portion with devils and damned spirits.

APPLICATION.

WHEN St. Paul reasoned "of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled." Did a heathen judge

tremble, and shall a Christian be stupid and unaffected? "Behold he cometh with clouds! Every eye shall see him!" *Your eyes shall see him.* You have received the solemn summons this day. What will you do? If wise, you will act like Noah, "who, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, builded an ark, to the saving of his house." If unwise, you will be like his infidel neighbors, who laughed him to scorn, and perished in the flood. If ever you would wish then to be numbered with the saints, now lay to heart the solemn truths you have heard. Retire a little from the bustle of the world, and from the company of the gay. Endeavor to realize the important scene. O think of the tremendous day, and the poor miserable state of poor Christless sinners. "Those who are then found Christless, will also be speechless, helpless, and hopeless. How will their heads hang down, and their knees knock together! O what pale faces, quivering lips, and fainting hearts! O dreadful day, when the earth shall be trembling, the stars falling, the trumpet sounding, the dead rising, the elements melting, and the world on fire."

This scene, so tremendous to a sinner, will be the most happy and joyful that ever was known to the humble believer in Jesus. The second coming of Christ is spoken of in Scripture as a most desirable event; and true Christians are described as "loving his appearance," and saying, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." And would you not wish to call this great and glorious Judge your friend, and to be owned by him at the great day? Well then, know, my friends, that he is now set before you in the gospel, as an all-sufficient and most gracious Savior. He is now as gracious as he will then be glorious. Why should you keep at a distance from him? His blood can cleanse you from all your past sins, though deeply dyed as scarlet and crimson. He came to seek and save such sinners as you. Look then to him, and be saved. Come but to him, he will not cast you out. Believe in him, and he will be your friend. Your first business in religion is to fly to your Savior's arms, and find salvation in his blood. He will then give you his Holy Spirit, to soften your hearts, subdue your iniquities, and enable you to bring forth those works of love, which he will graciously own and reward in the great day.

Let the thoughts of "appointed death and judgment" be duly improved by the believer. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of

persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of God?" What watchfulness, what seriousness becomes us! Let us be concerned to be always ready; daily walking humbly and closely with God: sitting loose to all created objects, from which death may so suddenly separate us; and having our affections set on heavenly things, to which death will so readily transmit us. Look on death as a disarmed foe; a serpent which may hiss, but cannot sting. Look on judgment as a most desirable event; when, soul and body being united, and made perfect in holiness, shall be openly acknowledged, and for ever made happy in the full enjoyment of Christ to all eternity.

Blessed be God, for Jesus Christ.

PRAYER.—GRANT, O most holy God, that the solemn things we have now heard concerning Death and Judgment, may deeply and durably affect our hearts! Almighty God, so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom! O teach us how frail we are!—how short our lives are; and how uncertain their continuance! May it be our first and chief care to be prepared for our great change! May sin, which is the sting of Death, be freely pardoned, for the sake of Jesus, who died for us, the just for the unjust!—and may the Holy Spirit make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light! Then shall Death, though awful to Nature, be welcome to Grace, and prove our inexpressible gain.

And O, that in the great and dreadful day, when Christ shall come in solemn pomp to judgment, and when we must all appear before his tribunal, we may be found at his right hand, and hear him say to us, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world."

SERMON XII.

HELL AND HEAVEN.

Matt. xxvi. 46. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into Life eternal.

THAT there are two eternal states, the one of happiness, and the other of misery, in one of which each of us will soon be fixed, is a truth which most men profess to believe. But if we look at the actions of most men, and these speak louder than their words, we are forced to say with the Scripture—"all men have not faith." A true belief of an eternal hell, and an eternal heaven, cannot fail to make us fly from the one, and endeavor to secure the other. But even where we may hope there is a settled belief of these things, it must be

owned through the cares and labors, or pleasures of life, they do not make so strong an impression upon us as they ought, nor are we so diligent in our preparation for eternity as we should be. It will be therefore profitable for us to consider those two states of hell and heaven, which are spoken of in the text; which tells us what will be the immediate consequence of the sentences which Christ, the great Judge of quick and dead, shall pronounce on all mankind, at the great day. To those on his right hand he will say, "Come, ye blessed;" to those on his left, "Go, ye cursed." The sentence will be no sooner pronounced than executed. "These last shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

The very word *Eternity* ought to fix our attention on this great subject. O that it may have as good an effect upon every person here, as it had upon a lady, of whom the following story is related by several authors. A lady, who was fond of gaiety, spent the whole afternoon and evening with a party at cards, and other vain amusements; and, returning home late at night, found her waiting-maid diligently reading a religious book. Happening to look over her shoulder, she saw what it was, and said, Poor melancholy soul, why dost thou sit here so long, poring upon thy book? After this she retired to bed, but could not sleep; she lay sighing and weeping for several hours. Being repeatedly asked by her servant what was the matter, she burst into tears, and said—"O, it was one word that I saw in your book that troubles me; there I saw the word *Eternity*." God grant, my friends, that we may now so consider eternity, that the word may not be a trouble to us, but a pleasure! In order to do this, we must *First*, Consider the Scripture account of hell; that so we may escape it; and, *Secondly*, The Scripture account of heaven, that so we may be put upon seeking it.

First, then, let us turn our thoughts to the account that the word of God gives us of hell. It is true, it is an awful subject, and wicked men do not love to hear of it: but if they cannot bear to hear of it, how will they be able to endure it? Our Savior, in the text, calls it *Everlasting punishment*.

It is *punishment*. Now punishment is a pain inflicted on account of the breaking of some law. Hell is a prison, where the breakers of God's law will be confined and punished. God has made known his will in the ten commandments. These require us to love and serve him; but being fallen

creatures, and unable of ourselves to do it aright, he has also given us his gospel. Herein Christ is set forth as an all-sufficient Savior; able and willing to save us from the guilt already contracted by our sins; and to renew and sanctify us, that we may comply with his will, and serve him acceptably. This is certainly our reasonable service. But the sinner refuses it. He is so strongly bound with the cords of his sins, so in love with the lusts of the flesh, so besotted with the love of the world, that he persists in his sin, notwithstanding the warnings of God; and neglects salvation, though a thousand times invited and entreated. Thus he lives, and thus he dies. What must be the consequence? God is just, as well as merciful. His laws cannot be dispensed with. The sinner has no room to complain. He was warned; he was entreated; but he chose the ways of sin, and now he must take the wages; for "the wages of sin is death." Not the death of the body only, for good men as well as bad men die; but the *second death*, the death of the soul in its everlasting separation from God, the fountain of life and happiness.

This is the import of that awful word *depart*. In the present world, whether men know it or not, all their comfort grows from his favor. God is the chief good, and the source of all the good in the world. It is he who has made creatures what they are. It is his sun, which fills the world with light; it is his power, by which man subsists, and enjoys his senses and his health. It is from his creatures we get our food and raiment; and though wicked men forget God in all their mercies, they are nevertheless from him, and in their proper tendency lead to him, for "the goodness of God leadeth us to repentance." But in hell, all these comforts will be withdrawn. They did not answer their purpose to soften the hard and rebellious heart to obedience; and now, the season of trial and the day of grace being over, there is no end for which they should be continued.

But it is not the loss of bodily comforts only that the damned must sustain; they must for ever lose the infinite pleasures that the redeemed will enjoy in the presence of Christ, and in the society of the blessed. This indeed they do not value now; but they will then. They will then plainly see that heaven itself consists in the presence and favor of God. They will have a tormenting prospect of the happiness of others: so Dives, in the parable, is represented as seeing "Abraham afar

off, and Lazarus in his bosom:" and this will aggravate their misery, as it would that of a man perishing for hunger to see others feasting; or, as our Lord expresses it, Luke xv. 28, "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out."

The punishment of *loss* is not all; there is the punishment of *sense* likewise; hell is not only the loss of happiness, but it is the sense and feeling of the most exquisite sufferings. Take an account of it from the lips of Jesus Christ himself; speaking of hell, he says, "Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." This is the description he gives of it over and over again, in Mark ix. By "the worm that dieth not" is generally understood the gnawings of a guilty conscience; or that painful *remorse* which sinners will feel, when they remember the sin and folly which brought them to hell. Thus, in the parable, Abraham speaks to Dives, and says, "Son, remember that thou, in thy lifetime, receivedst thy good things."

Memory will be a dreadful source of misery. "Son, remember!" said Abraham to Dives. Poor sinners will remember the good instructions they received from their parents, the faithful sermons they heard from their ministers, the solemn admonitions they had from their own conscience. They will remember what Sabbaths they misspent, what mercies they abused, what judgments they slighted. They will remember with what contempt they treated serious piety; and in vain will they wish to be in the place of those they once despised. It will be intolerable for them to reflect on their folly in parting with heaven for such wretched trifles. How despicably small will the pleasures of sin then appear to them. They will not be able to bear themselves, when they think for what they have lost their God, and heaven, and their souls. And this will fill them with the most horrid rage and fury. They will be inwardly racked with envy, hatred, and resentment against God, against their tempters, against the companions of their sins, and especially against themselves.

But besides this inward torment, or "the worm that never dies," there will be *outward torment*, or "the fire that is never quenched." The nature of this fire, or the place where it is, are matters of foolish curiosity: our business is not to amuse ourselves with questions about it, but to take care to avoid it. God, who sustained

the companions of Daniel in a hot furnace, so that they were not scorched, can easily support life in the burnings of hell. The wrath of God, who, as an avenger of sin, is "a consuming fire," is the hell of hell: and "who can tell the power of his anger?" Our utmost fears of it come short of the truth. A spark of this fire in a guilty conscience is intolerable, for, "a wounded spirit who can bear?" Job, in his affliction, cried, "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God set themselves in array against me."

What will terribly add to the greatness of these sufferings, is, that they are without any intermission or mitigation. In the greatest miseries of this life, God is graciously pleased to allow some intervals of rest; but of those in hell it is said, Rev. xiv. 11, "They have no rest day nor night." Think of this, you who never cease from sin, but do evil day and night; the damned have no rest from their torment. Dives asked but a momentary alleviation of his torture, when he desired that Lazarus might be sent "to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue;" but even this was denied him.

This, my friends, is a very short and slight account, from the Scriptures of truth, of the dreadful sufferings of miserable sinners in hell. And who, in his senses, would venture upon such a course of life, as must lead to *one hour's* sufferings of this kind? But, O, it is not an hour, it is not a day, it is not a week, it is not a month, it is not a year, it is not seven years, or fourteen years, or a hundred years; it is not a thousand years—it is not merely as long as from the foundation of the world to this day! O how would the damned rejoice, if ten thousand years might finish their miseries! but it is for ETERNITY. Do you start at the word? It is Christ's word. Christ says, in the text, "these shall go away into *everlasting* punishment." In vain do letter-learning men try to reason away the solemn truth, and lessen the duration of future punishment; Christ says it is *eternal*; and uses the very same word to signify an *eternal heaven*, as he does to express an *eternal hell*: (for the words are the same in the original,) besides, it is said, Rev. xiv. 14, "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever;" and our Lord also declares, "their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched."

Tremble, sinner, at "the wrath to come." That wrath which is now coming, and will soon be here, will even then "be wrath to come." When a million million million

years are past, it will still be "wrath to come," because it shall never have an end.

O that we could impress upon you a lasting idea of *Eternity*! Suppose all the vast ocean to be distilled by single drops, and a thousand years to pass between every drop, how many millions of years would it take to empty it? Suppose the whole world to be made up by grains of sand, and one grain only to be taken away in a thousand years; how many millions of years would it take to remove the whole? We cannot count how long: yet we suppose it may be done in a most immense length of time. Suppose it done. Suppose the ocean emptied, drop by drop. Suppose the globe reduced, grain by grain, to the last sand. But would eternity be spent? Would eternity be lessened? No, not at all. It is a whole eternity still; and the torments of the damned would be as far from an end, as when the reckoning began. A minute bears some proportion to a million of years; but millions of millions bear no proportion to eternity.

Sinners, have you reason? Have you common sense? Have you self-love? Summon up your powers, then, and determine this moment, whether you had best go on in the way of sin, for the sake of your short-lived pleasures, thus to be repaid with everlasting woe; or whether it will not be your wisdom this moment to forsake them, and, by the grace of God, choose the way to eternal life.

Before we proceed, stop, and take a view of *sin*. Will any man but a fool "make a mock of sin," when he sees what its wages are? Is that "a madman who casteth about arrows, firebrands, and death, and saith, Am I not in sport?" He is ten thousand times more mad, who sports with sin, and laughs at that which fills hell with groans and tears. Be persuaded not to trifle, as many do, with the name of hell and damnation. Many, who cannot bear to hear these in a sermon, use them in a jesting manner, in their common discourse. This is one of Satan's ways to ruin souls. People sport with these things till they forget their importance, and find, too late, that they are serious matters.

"Who laughs at sin laughs at his Maker's frowns;
Laughs at the sword of justice o'er his head;
Laughs at the dear Redeemer's tears and wounds,
Who, but for sin, had never groan'd nor bled!"

"Awake, then, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Fly, sinner, from the "wrath to come," "Escape for thy life, look not behind thee, tarry not in all the plain, lest thou be consumed." Think what a mis-

erable soul in hell would give to be in thy present situation. Think, how hell would resound with joy, could the good news of salvation be preached to lost souls. Well, Sirs, they are preached to *you*. This day is salvation come to this house. As yet there is hope. Christ came to deliver from the wrath to come. It may be you were brought here at this time for the very purpose of being warned to fly to the refuge. Christ is a mighty Savior. Nothing is too hard for him. "Come, then, for all things are ready." If God has made you willing, depend upon it he will make you welcome. Who can tell, but instead of being fuel for everlasting burnings, it may be said of you—"Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire!"

We now gladly turn to the more pleasing part of our text—"but the righteous into eternal life."

Who are the righteous? "There is none righteous" upon the earth, saith the Scripture, "no, not one"—that is *in himself*. A righteous man and a sinner are two contraries; to be righteous, is to keep the law perfectly, which no mere man ever did; and no fallen man can; for "all have sinned;" sin being "the transgression of the law." How then can any man, being a sinner, become righteous? There is but one way. It is by the righteousness of Christ, put to the account of an unrighteous man. This righteousness Christ wrought out by his perfect obedience to the law. This righteousness is held out in the gospel; and when a sinner is convinced that he wants it, and must perish without it, he comes to God for it; God gives it him; he receives it by faith, puts it on, wears it, lives and dies in it, and being "found in Christ," he is admitted, in this wedding-garment, to the marriage-supper of the Lamb.

The persons called "righteous" in the text had thus put on Christ; and the faith whereby they did so, wrought by love. The context shows how their faith wrought by works; they loved the Members of Christ for Christ's sake, and showed their love to him, by helping them in their afflictions. These are the persons who go into life eternal.

What is heaven? A carnal man can have no idea of it, or none but what is carnal and ridiculous. It is not a Mahometan paradise, where the lusts of the flesh may be indulged. No; "life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel;" and there we find it consists in a complete deliverance from all the evils of the present state; and in the enjoyment of all that

can render the soul perfectly and for ever happy.

Need we be told that "man is born to trouble?" This is our sad, and only certain inheritance; mingled indeed, with a thousand undeserved mercies. But all the sorrows of a believer shall cease at his death. No more excessive labor and fatigue. No pinching want and poverty. No painful, irksome, lothesome diseases. The inhabitant of heaven shall not say, "I am sick." Nor shall any of the numberless sorrows of mind, we now feel, follow us to glory. We shall not suffer in our own persons, nor shall we suffer in or by our relations or friends. We shall "drop the body of sin," in the dust; and we shall no more be the grieved spectators of sin in the world. "God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away," Rev. xxi. 4.

But this is not all. Our knowledge, which is now so very small, shall be wonderfully increased. It is eternal life to know God; but O, how little do we now know of him! but "the pure in heart shall see God," and know, in a moment, more than all the learned could attain in many years. "We shall know, even as we are known,—we shall have as certain, immediate, and familiar a knowledge of divine things, as any of our most intimate friends now have of us; yea, we shall know God, and Christ, and angels, in the same kind of way that they now know us; not "through a glass darkly," but "face to face," as clearly and distinctly as one man beholds another when they converse together. But the heaven of heaven will be the presence of Christ, being with Christ, and beholding his glory. This is what Christ, as Mediator, prayed for in behalf of his disciples. "Father, I will, that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory," John xvii. 24. This is what Paul longed for and wished to depart to enjoy: "I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ," Phil. i. 23. And what will render the vision of Christ so very excellent is, that "we shall be like him, when we see him as he is"—we shall bear his amiable and illustrious image of light and love, holiness and happiness, in our souls. Even our bodies, now vile by reason of sin, and which must soon be viler still in the corruption of the grave, shall, when raised from the dead, be made like unto

his glorious body. Add to this another most desirable blessing; the constant company of the saints. Believers shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; with the prophets and apostles; and with all the redeemed of every nation. But what tongue can tell, what heart can conceive, what God has prepared for them that love him?

APPLICATION

WHAT more can be said to engage your regard to religion, than what has been now said! Life and death, blessing and cursing, heaven and hell, have been set before you. Surely "*one thing is needful*," even the care of the soul.

"Is there a dreadful hell?" Well; we have been warned of the danger, and advised to fly to Jesus, the only deliverer from the wrath to come.

How great is the evil of sin, seeing that God will punish it in this dreadful manner! Is there a hell of eternal torment for sinners? O then be afraid of sin, however pleasant it may be. Who would drink a glass of the most delicious liquor, however thirsty he might be, if he knew that deadly poison was mixed with it? Beware then of sin, which infallibly destroys the soul, and shun it as you would shun hell.

Is there a glorious heaven? We are invited to seek it. There is but one way to heaven, and Christ is that way. O what a Savior is Jesus! Can we, who deserve hell, avoid it? Yes, glory be to him, he shed his precious blood to redeem his people from it. His perfect righteousness is the only *title* to glory; and this righteousness is theirs, who believe in him. There must also be a *fitness* for this holy state, and this is the work of the Spirit. If we are found among the redeemed, we owe it to the Father's love, the Son's salvation, and the Spirit's grace. God grant that we may so hear his word at this, and at all times, that, mixing faith with it, we may profit thereby; and "growing up into Christ in all things," and looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life," we may faithfully and diligently serve him, and our generation, according to his will; enjoy his gracious presence in all the means of grace; experience the support of his gospel in the trying hour of death; and, finally, have "abundant entrance afforded us into his everlasting kingdom and glory."

Now to the God of our salvation, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be universal and everlasting praise.—Amen.

PRAYER.—ALMIGHTY and most holy God, thou hast now set before us Life and Death, Heaven and Hell!—into one of these eternal states must each of us soon enter! O suffer us not to be careless and unconcerned about our everlasting state! Our sins have exposed us to thy dreadful wrath, and it is of thy mercies that we are not already consumed; but great has been thy forbearance! May thy goodness lead us to repentance!—and may we be seriously concerned to flee from the wrath to come, even to Jesus Christ, the only deliverer from it!

Thou hast also set before us a most glorious and happy state, to which believers are entitled by the righteousness of Christ, and for which they are prepared by the Spirit of God. O that this glorious prize of the Christian calling, may ever be before our eyes!—and may we so run as finally to obtain it! Let not the alluring vanities of this world engage our hearts; but may we set our affections on things above! May our conversation be in heaven, and when we are called hence by Death, may God graciously afford us an abundant entrance into his eternal kingdom and glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord!

SERMON XIII.

TO CHILDREN.

A NEW HEART THE CHILD'S BEST PORTION.

Ezek. xxxvi. 26. A new heart will I give you.

My dear children, I hope you will mind what I am going to say to you. I am going to read you a sermon made on purpose for children, and made so plain, that I hope you will understand it all. I suppose you know that you have *souls*, which must live when you die, and must go to heaven or hell for ever. Now do you not think it is right to mind your souls, so that they may not go to hell? I know that you love to play, and it is right you should play sometimes; but you should mind something else besides play. You know there is a God that lives in heaven, and it is he who gives you meat and drink, and clothes; it is he who keeps you from being sick, and from dying; and he does this, that you may have time to think of him, and pray to him. For I would have you know, that it is a terrible thing for God to be angry with you. It is a great deal worse than for your father and mother, or master, to be angry with you. Perhaps they may beat you when they are angry: but God Almighty can cast you into hell, to be burned in the fire for ever and ever. Perhaps you will say, I hope he will not do so to me. My dear children, I hope so too; and I read this to you, that you may know how to avoid that misery, and that you may learn the way to heaven. Now Jesus Christ is the way to heaven. He came down from heaven to

save us from going to hell; and he did this by suffering and dying for our sins, that we might not suffer for them ourselves; just as if one of you was going to be beat, and punished for doing wrong, and another person should, in love to you, and to keep you from being hurt, be beat in your stead, and so you escape the punishment. The first thing that must be known, in order to your being saved, is this, that you are sinners; that you have "left undone what you ought to have done, and that you have done the things you ought not to have done." When your parents have been angry with you for doing wrong, you have, perhaps, thought of it afterwards, and have been very sorry for it; and when you feel sorry for it, you want them to forgive you, and you go to them and ask their pardon. You also promise to do so no more. Now there is something in religion like this. We have all done what we should not do, and God may justly be angry with us; but "there is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared." His dear Son Jesus Christ bore his anger for us; and he sends his servants with the Gospel, that is, good news; telling us, that if we come to him by Jesus Christ, he will forgive us, and be kind to us, and help us to do better for time to come. Now the text I have read, is God's kind promise to his children, *A new heart will I give you.* The word *heart* does not signify a part of your bodies, but it means the mind, the spirit, the disposition; that God will make it new, and right, and good; so that you should love, and serve, and enjoy him, both here and hereafter. It is the same thing that is in another place called being *born again*. You may remember reading in the third chapter of St. John, that an aged man, named Nicodemus, came to Jesus Christ by night, to be taught by him; and that our Savior said to him, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.* By this he meant a change of heart, which is made by the power and grace of the Spirit of God. Now if the heart was not bad, there would be no need to change it; but the heart of every person, of every child, is very bad, till grace alters it. We are all born in sin, and love sin, until we are born again; and then we love Christ, and every thing that is good. And you will observe that being baptized, or christened, is not the same as being born again. Water cannot cleanse or change the heart; it is "an outward visible sign of grace," but not grace itself. The nature of this gracious change I shall now explain to you, by describing both the

old heart which God takes away, *and the new heart* which God gives.

I. The heart is by nature *hard*; it is compared in the words after the text to a *stone*, that feels nothing; the heart of man by nature has no feeling; that is, no feeling of spiritual things. A person who has no grace may be tender-hearted to his fellow-creatures, and "weep with them that weep;" but yet not mind what God says to him in the Bible. The Bible says we are all lost and ruined sinners; that the wrath of God abideth on us, if we believe not; that God is angry with the wicked, and will turn them into hell. But how few people regard this! They eat and drink, and take their pleasure, even on the Lord's day, as if nothing was the matter. Now is this not owing to the hardness of their hearts? If you were to see a poor wretch at the bar, condemned to die by the judge, and he was to remain unmoved, or even laugh in his face, you would think he had a very hard heart. Now this is the case of every sinner. My dear children, is it not *your* case? You are "by nature children of wrath, even as others;" but when was you concerned about it? You would cry and be very sorry if your parents were angry with you, and threatened to turn you out of doors, and never see you any more; but how much worse would it be, if God should say to you, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting burnings."

The hardness of the heart appears also in not being moved and melted with the goodness of God. O how good is God to us all! He makes the sun to shine, and the flowers to spring, and the corn and herbs to grow. It is he who gives us food day by day, and rest by night; and "his goodness should lead us to repentance." "He has also so loved the world," wicked as it is, "that he sent his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And he has sent his ministers to us, with the glad tidings of this salvation, and they warn us to flee from the wrath to come; they invite and beseech us to be reconciled to God. But how hard is the heart that remains unmoved with all this tender love and goodness! What should you think of a child, who treated a dear father or a kind mother with neglect and scorn, after they had spoken and behaved in the kindest manner to him? Would you not think him very brutish and wicked? Well, thus sinners treat the blessed God. And have not *you* done so? It is God who has led and fed you all your days. He gave you kind parents and friends to care for you

when infants, or you must have been starved to death, and perished for want. He gives you clothes, and food, and health, and pleasures, and friends; and he does more, he gives you his gospel; he sends you the word of salvation, he gives you opportunity to learn to read it, and hear it; and what return have you made for all his goodness? O that your hearts may melt in godly sorrow for sin! May the Lord give you "the heart of flesh," the soft heart, the feeling heart, which "trembles at his word," and "fears the Lord and his goodness." Then will you be afraid of the least sin; you will avoid all bad company; you will not dare to take the name of the Lord in vain; you will not play on the Sabbath day; nor will you behave badly to your parents, or any other persons. And if you have this soft heart, you will be very sorry for your sins, and sorry to think you have offended God, and sorry to think that the blessed Jesus should suffer such shocking pains as he did, for your sins.

II. The heart is by nature *proud*: but the new heart is *humble*. Man, as a *creature*, has no cause to be proud, much less as a *sinner*, yet we are all born proud. There never was a person born without a proud heart; though some do not show it so much as others. You that are children know how apt you are to be proud of new clothes, and fine things; and how fond you are of showing them to others; and as people grow up, they grow prouder; proud of beauty, riches, learning, or office: yea, proud of being religious. So you read of the Pharisee, who went up to the temple to pray, and with monstrous pride stood by himself, and said, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, nor even as this Publican:" and then he boasted of his good works. But God abhorred this proud wretch, while he looked with compassion on the man whom the Pharisee despised, the poor Publican, whose heart was broken for sin, and who had nothing to say for himself, but "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Even children are proud of their religion; they boast of being better than their brothers and sisters: they love to tell of *their* faults, and of their own goodness. My dear children, why do you hope to go to heaven? Is it because you are not so bad as others; because you say your prayers, and go to church or meeting? If so, you are proud; proud of your own righteousness, which the Scripture calls "filthy rags." Now, who would be proud of filthy rags? But the righteousness of Christ is like a fine clean white robe; is not that better? And would you not be glad to

have it? Pray then to God to clothe you with it.

The new heart is an *humble* heart. The person who has it thinks so highly of the great and blessed God, the majesty of heaven and earth, that he shrinks, as it were, into nothing before him. He has such a view of the holiness of God, and his commandments, and such a sense of the wickedness and deceitfulness of his own heart, that he lies as it were in the dust, "abhors himself, and repents in dust and ashes."

III. The heart is by nature *worldly*. All natural men are called in Scripture—*Men of the world, whose portion is in this life*: they think only of the world, they speak only of the world, and all their desires are worldly. "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and how shall we be clothed?" After all these, and only such things as these, do worldly men seek. In this case there is no heart for religion. "God is not in all their thoughts;" and for the sake of the world, they neglect the Gospel, and lose their own souls. They are "careful about many things," with Martha, but do not choose "the one thing needful," with Mary. Now this is a sad state to be in! If we love the world, the love of God is not in us, 1 John ii. 15. If we mind "earthly things," so as to make them our chief good, our "end will be destruction," Phil. iii. 19. And say now, my dear children, are not *your* hearts worldly? Though you are not engaged in worldly business, yet your little hearts love only the things of this world. Are not play and pleasure all you seek and delight in. Perhaps you do not like prayer; either you do not pray at all in secret, or satisfy yourselves with a few formal words which you have got by heart, without feeling any desire after Christ, and grace, and salvation. And when your parents pray in their families, as I hope they do, you do not regard what is said; and when you are in the house of God, perhaps you do not mind what the minister says, or content yourself merely with remembering the text. But this is not religion. The worldly heart must be taken away, and you must have a heavenly, spiritual heart, that delights in God and Christ, and prayer and praise; in the word of God and spiritual conversation. Blessed be God, there have been many such children; perhaps you have read of them in the tracts published for children. The Lord make you like them; that so you may live to God, if you are spared to live longer; or made fit for heaven, if he should be pleased to remove you.

IV. The heart is by nature *wicked*; the Scripture says it is *desperately* wicked, Jer. xvii. 9. And our Savior says, Matt. xv. 19, *Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, thefts, murders, and many other bad things*. Now you know they must be in the heart, or they could not come out of it. Some people will tell you they have *good hearts*, even though they speak bad words, and do bad actions. But this is a mistake. A good tree bears good fruits; and a sweet spring does not send forth bitter waters. Now every person's heart is wicked by nature; and if some people do not commit such wicked actions as others, it is not because their hearts are better by nature, but because God would not let them be so wicked as they would; just as they chain up wild beasts to keep them from destroying us. My dear children, you may see the truth of this in yourselves. You know how apt you are, or were once, to tell lies. Nobody told you how to tell lies. You did it naturally. Now is not that a proof of a wicked heart? Lying is a great sin. It is the work of the devil, who is "a liar, and the father of lies." Lying is so hateful to God, that he will not let any liars go to heaven, "nothing that maketh a lie," Rom. xxi. but he says, ver. 8, "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." O pray to God to forgive you this great sin. You may know that your hearts are wicked by your going into a passion when you are crossed, and great anger is a degree of murder in God's esteem, Matt. v. 22. But the wickedness of the heart appears most of all in its enmity against God; for St. Paul says, Rom. viii. 7, "the carnal mind is enmity against God;" and have not you shown this in your dislike of religion, in breaking the Sabbath, in taking the Lord's name in vain, in disobeying your parents, and in many other ways? See then how needful is it that you should have a new heart; and the new heart is a *pure heart*. Jesus Christ says, Matt. v. 8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Now the heart is "purified by faith." When we see what a wicked heart we have, and are filled with grief and fear, then we fly for refuge to Jesus Christ. Then God pardons our past sins for his sake, and gives us his Holy Spirit to make us hate sin, and fight against it; and make us desire to know his will, and love to do it. Pray then with David, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me," Ps. li. 10. Remember, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

V. The heart by nature is *deceitful*: yea, the Scripture says, *deceitful above all things*. It calls good evil, and evil good. It cheats people with false pretences and vain excuses; so that the way of the wicked seems right to them, although it leads to destruction. There is scarcely any sinner, however great, that does not flatter himself all will be well at last, though God tells him to the contrary. On this account, "he that trusteth his own heart is a fool." But when the Lord gives a new heart, he makes it *sincere*. A real Christian is like Nathaniel, of whom our Savior said, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile;" that is no allowed hypocrisy in his dealings with God or man.

VI. And lastly, The heart is naturally an *unbelieving* heart. It is a sad thing that man should be more ready to believe the father of lies than the God of truth. It was by hearkening to the devil, that Eve, our first mother, sinned; and there has been in mankind ever since "an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God." It is plain that people do not believe God. If they believed what he says of sin, they would not dare to practise it. If they believed what he says of Christ, surely they would come to him for life and salvation. And the reason they do not, is, they "love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." But the new heart is a *believing* heart. The Christian takes God at his word. He believes his threatenings, and fears. He believes his promises in Christ, and hopes. He believes his commandments, and obeys. Without this faith "it is impossible to please God;" for he that believeth not God hath made him a liar. But faith glorifies God. "He that believeth on Christ hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John iii. 36.

APPLICATION.

AND now, dear children, I have told you what sort of hearts we have by nature, and what the Lord can make them by his grace, I hope you will consider what I have said, and consider what hearts you have. Are they not *hard*, and *proud*, and *worldly*, and *wicked*, and *deceitful*, and *unbelieving*? I think you must own they are so by nature. And does not this show you that you must be *born again*, and have a *new heart*? If your heart should

ed as you grow older; and if you should die in your sins, you will be lost for ever.

But, my dear children, I hope better things. Do not you know that Jesus Christ came "to seek, and to save that which was lost?" And do you not remember reading that some good people brought their little children to him, and desired him to bless them? And he said, *Suffer little children to come unto me*. Would you not be very glad if he was here now, and you could go and kneel down to him, and say, Blessed Jesus, bless me, even me also? Well, though he is in heaven, you may do this now. He is the same to-day that he was then. He loves little children as well as ever. And I beg and beseech each of you, when you go home, to go into some private place, and kneel down, and say, Blessed Jesus, I have a wicked heart that makes me do wicked things, and I am afraid of thy anger: but I have heard in the Gospel, that thou hast died for sinners to save them from hell, and sin, and the world; O save me, lest I perish. Take away my heart of stone, and give me a heart of flesh; a heart to know, trust, and love thee, that I may serve thee in this world, and be for ever happy in the world to come.

Let none of you say, "I am not old enough, or not big enough, to be religious; it is time enough yet." Dear children, you are not too young to die. Younger than you are in the grave. Besides, you cannot be too young to serve the Lord. Can you be *safe* too soon? Can you be happy too soon? Can you glorify God too much? Surely not. Well, then, pray for a new heart. It is the best gift that God can give you, or you receive; and may God Almighty, for Christ's sake, bestow it upon every one of you. Amen!

PRAYER.—BLESSED and gracious God, our heavenly Father. We are taught, by thy holy word, that our hearts are, by nature, very sinful; that they are hard, and proud, and worldly, and wicked, and deceitful, and unbelieving: and we feel that this is all true; and we are very sorry that though we are so young, our hearts are so bad. But Oh! merciful God, do not be angry with us, and punish us as our sins deserve: but, for the sake of Jesus Christ, who died to save poor sinners, have mercy upon us, and forgive all our past sins. And, as it has pleased thee to promise to give thy children a new heart, we pray thee to give us new hearts. Give us soft and feeling hearts, humble hearts, heavenly hearts, holy hearts, sincere hearts, and believing hearts, that so we may love and serve thee all our days, and when we die be received into heaven.

SERMON XIV.

THE LORD'S PRAYER.

Matt. vi. 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13th verses. After this manner therefore pray ye. Our Father which art in heaven; hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

PRAYER to God is the bounden duty of all men. "We live, and move, and have our being in him." "Every good and perfect gift proceeds from him." "Men ought therefore always to pray, and not faint." We are so sinful, that we always need mercy. We are so weak, that we always need help. We are so empty, that we always need supplies. We are so exposed, that we always need protection. How reasonable then that we should continue in prayer!

But we greatly need direction in prayer. We know not how to pray, nor what to pray for, as we ought. Therefore Christ has been pleased to teach us in these words, which contain an excellent pattern for prayer. Not that we are tied down to use these very words, much less to use them always; but *after this manner* we are to pray. Now as many persons constantly use this prayer, it may be very useful to explain it; because it may be feared that a great many say the words without knowing their meaning, which is formality at best; and many contradict every part of this prayer by their wicked lives, which is base hypocrisy. May we therefore be assisted by the good Spirit rightly to understand it, that so, whenever we use it hereafter, we may offer up a reasonable and spiritual sacrifice, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

I. *Our Father which art in heaven.* We should always begin our prayer with proper thoughts of God. And what thoughts of him are so proper as those suggested by these words, namely, his *goodness* and his *greatness*? As a *father* he is good. As a *heavenly father* he is great. Thus are we taught to approach him with confidence and reverence.

As the Creator of all men, God may, in a general sense, be called the father of all: but it is in a higher and sweeter sense that he is here called a father. We are to take it in a Gospel view—God reconciled to believing sinners through faith in the blood of Jesus Christ. God is angry with the wicked every day. He does not look down upon them with a father's eye, nor do they

look up to him with a child-like spirit. Therefore this prayer is not fit for the use of a man who lives in sin, whose carnal mind is enmity against God. How dare the swearer, the liar, the drunkard, call God a father? God will not own the relation. If such men pray, might they not rather cry—Our father which art in *hell*? for Christ said to such persons, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." John viii. 44.

But when a person is convinced of his lost estate by sin; when he is enlightened to know Christ as a Savior; and when by precious faith he comes to God through him; then God is reconciled to him; his anger is turned away, and he comforts him. Then he may look up to God as a merciful God, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin; for "to as many as receive Christ, and the atonement through him, he giveth power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name;" and to such only is "the spirit of adoption" given, whereby they cry "Abba, father." For it is one thing to use the word *father*, and another to approach him, as a loving child comes to a tender parent, with a persuasion of his being able and willing to supply his wants. To such persons this name is full of comfort; for they are emboldened to believe, that if earthly parents, though evil, know how to give good gifts to their children, God, our heavenly father, is much more disposed to do them good, and bless them with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.

But this name teaches us also the *greatness* of God. Children ought to treat their earthly parents with great respect: but what reverence is due to the Father of spirits, whose throne is in the heavens! yea, "the heaven of heavens cannot contain him." God is everywhere present; he is not confined to heaven; but he is said to dwell there, because there he displays the brightest beams of his glorious majesty; and there angels and saints bow low before his feet, crying, day and night, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty!" Such thoughts as these should possess our minds when we say, *Our Father which art in heaven.* Think of his goodness and his greatness when you pray. Take care to lift up your hearts to heaven when you pray to him who dwells in heaven, or else your prayers will never reach his throne.

II. *Hallowed be thy name!* This is the first petition; and is placed first, to show us that our first and chief desire should be *that God may be glorified*; for

that is the meaning of it. The name of God signifies God himself; as he is pleased to make himself known to us by his names and titles, his words and works: for as a man is known to us by his name, so God has made himself to us in the gospel. There all his glorious perfections shine and unite. There he shows himself "a just God and a Savior." Now, to *hallow* God's name, is to *sanctify* it; to hold it sacred; for to sanctify any thing is to set it apart from every profane and common use. In this petition, then, we pray that God would enable us to glorify him in all things whereby he makes himself known. We must glorify him in our *hearts*, by high, holy, reverent thoughts of him. We must glorify him by our *tongues*, by always speaking of him in the most serious manner. We must glorify him in all our actions; not only by acts of solemn worship, but by the most common actions of life; for, whether we eat or drink, all should be done with a view to the glory of God.

Now, how dreadfully far from this are many who say this prayer, and who no sooner get up from their knees, than they profane and blaspheme this holy name! Think of this, you who curse and swear, or take the Lord's name in vain. When you say, in a thoughtless manner, God bless us! O God! O Christ! &c. is this to *hallow* the name of God? Leave off praying, or leave off swearing: for they cannot agree together.

But let every one that fears God, remember, that the glory of God is the first and chief thing that we are to ask for, and to desire, and see, even before our own good. Now, that we and others may do this, we are taught, in the next place, to pray,

III. *Thy kingdom come!* Now, this does not mean the kingdom of God's providence, which rules over all; this cannot be said to *come*, for it is come already, and will never cease: but it means that *spiritual* kingdom which Christ came to set up in the world. That kingdom of the Messiah, which the pious Jews had long expected, and which, when this prayer was given to the disciples, was said to be *at hand*. This kingdom of Christ did come soon after. It was set up when Christ ascended to heaven, and the Spirit descended from it. But still the prayer is as necessary as ever; for we pray that this kingdom may be established in our own hearts, and extended to all the world.

The kingdom of Christ is erected on purpose to destroy the kingdom of Satan.

The devil has usurped a dominion over all mankind; and though he does not now possess the bodies of men, as he once did, yet he "ruleth in the hearts of the children of disobedience," who are "led captive by him at his will;" and in some parts of the world he is still worshipped as God. Now, in order to destroy this infernal kingdom, Jesus Christ came into the world; he overcame Satan in all his attempts to seduce him; and on the cross he spoiled principalities and powers, and conquered when he fell; he deprived Satan of his power, and led captivity captive. Wherever he sends his gospel, he proclaims liberty; and wherever he gives his grace to any person, there Satan is dethroned: and being made willing to submit to Christ, the believer is translated out of Satan's kingdom of sin and darkness into the holy and happy kingdom of God's dear Son.

Now when we say, *Thy kingdom come* we pray that the light, power, liberty, and glory of Christ's spiritual kingdom may be more fully experienced in our own hearts, more fully established in our own souls. For as one observes—"In *worship* we pay our homage to God. In the *word*, we come to learn his laws. In the *sacraments*, we renew our oaths of allegiance. In *almsgiving*, we pay him tribute. In *prayer*, we ask his leave; and *praise* is our rent to the great Lord, from whom we hold our all."

Thus also we express our soul's desire for our poor fellow-sinners. Deeply affected with the state of Heathens, Jews, Mahometans and wicked Christians, we pour forth our souls in holy longings for their conversion, earnestly desiring the joyful day when it shall be said—"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever." Rev. xi. 15.

IV. *Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.* God, the glorious maker of the world, has a right to govern it. His will is the proper rule of his creatures' actions; and it is obeyed by them all, except men and devils. God has made known his will to us in his word. The law of the ten commandments shows what obedience he requires of us; but, as fallen creatures, we have rendered ourselves incapable of perfect obedience to it, and so of obtaining life by it. God has graciously given to us the law of faith, or the gospel of salvation by Jesus Christ; and this is his commandment, that we should "believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love

one another." But the natural man refuses obedience to this also; he is either unconcerned about salvation, or dislikes the way of it; and while he remains in this state, he cannot do the will of God in any respect acceptably, for "without faith it is impossible to please him." In short, "the carnal mind is enmity against God;" the will of the flesh is directly contrary to the will of God; but it accords with the will of Satan, sinners being "led captive by him at his will."

How necessary then is this petition—*thy* will be done! And it includes, 1. *A desire to know it*; as the Psalmist prays (143. 10.) "Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God;" or, as converted Saul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" 2. *A heart to do it*; a heart on which God has written his laws. It is related of a certain person, that when he was teaching his child to say this prayer, and came to this petition—"thy will be done," the child refused to say it, and would have it "*my* will be done." This poor simple child was far more honest than many of us, who say *thy* will be done, and yet determine to follow our own will: but the real Christian's desire is, "O that there were such an heart in me, to fear God, and to keep all his commandments always!" Deut. v. 29. We pray also, 3. *For strength* to do the will of God: for "*to will*" may be present, and yet how to perform that which is good we may not find; but, knowing that the Lord worketh in his people both *to will* and *to do*, we hereby pray that he would "make us perfect in every good work, to do his will; working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ. This petition also includes holy submission to the will of his providence, however afflictive, and that we may learn to bear it without murmuring, knowing that it is his will, and for our good.

Now, we pray for grace to do all this, in imitation of the spirits of just men made perfect, and of the sinless angels in heaven. "God's will is done in heaven." The angels that excel in strength do his commandment: hearken to the voice of his word: they do it humbly, cheerfully, diligently, constantly; and so do glorified saints in heaven, "for there his servants shall serve him." So let it be *our* meat and drink, to do the will of our heavenly Father, and to bear Christ's yoke, which is easy; and his burden, which is light."

V. *Give us this day our daily bread.* This petition implies our dependence on God for food, and all the supports and

comforts of life. Man, as a fallen creature, has forfeited the good things of this life, and deserves to be deprived of them all. The earth was cursed for man's sake, therefore in sorrow and labor he eats of it; but it is through the goodness of God that he has power to labor; that rain from heaven and fruitful seasons are even granted. It is "he who gives us our corn, and wine, and oil;" and, though the poor man works hard for his daily bread, it is no less the gift of God. To him also we owe the appetite that makes our food pleasant, and the power of digestion that makes it nourishing.

Moderation in our desires is here expressed. We are not taught to ask for riches and honors; they are often the destructive snares of those who possess them; but we may lawfully ask for food and raiment, "for our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of all these things;" ver. 22; and having these, we ought to be content.

We are not to ask for *weekly* bread, or *monthly* bread, or *yearly* bread; but for *daily* bread; for we must not boast of tomorrow, or depend on future years; but live in daily dependence on God, without anxious cares for a future time. "Sufficient to the day is the evil thereof;" and sufficient for the day is the good thereof; so that we are to exercise ourselves in daily prayer, and receive every meal, and every morsel, as the gift of a good God, which will make it sweeter.

The Christian will also ask for bread for his soul as well as his body. Christ is to the believer's soul what food is to the body. He is "the bread of life;" and if we are born of God, we shall daily desire to feed upon him in our hearts, by faith, with thanksgiving.

VI. *And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.* This petition is joined to the last by the word *and*, which may teach us, that without the forgiveness of sins, the comforts of this life can do us no real good; "for what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Every man is a sinner. There is not a creature who wants daily bread, that does not also want daily pardon; and yet how few are sensible of it! Sin is here compared to a debt. There is a debt of *duty* we owe to God; and, in case of failure, we contract a new debt to the justice of God. The debts we owe to man expose us to misery here; but the debts we owe to God expose us to eternal misery; for "the wages of sin is death." And be it remembered, we are not able to

pay a single farthing of this debt; if ever we are delivered from going to the prison of hell, it must be by a free pardon, for so we here pray—"forgive us our debts;" or, as it is elsewhere, "forgive us our trespasses." God will take no composition. We can make no amends. It is not taking care not to contract a new debt that will discharge an old one; this will not do with our neighbors, nor will it do with God. Free forgiveness alone will prevent our punishment. But be it carefully observed, that though a sinner is justified freely, it is only "through the redemption that is in Christ." It costs us nothing; but it cost him dear. And it is only through faith in his blood that we can receive it. With believing and penitent hearts we must go to God by Jesus Christ, and plead for his mercy for Christ's sake. At the same time we are here taught what is the true disposition of a gracious soul—a forgiving temper—"as we forgive our debtors;" that is, as we forgive those who have injured us in our property, person, or name. Not that our kindness to another deserves forgiveness at the hand of God; but that, as we cannot expect pardon from God, while we refuse it to those who ask us for it; we may humbly hope, that if we are enabled by grace to forgive others, God, whose thoughts and ways are infinitely above ours, will not reject our prayer for pardoning mercy through Jesus Christ.

VII. *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* Those whose sins are forgiven will be afraid of sinning again; and, knowing the power of temptation, will pray to be kept from it. Now *temptation* is any thing which makes *trial* of us, and proves what is in our hearts. Afflictions are God's trials of us, for our good; but all Satan's temptations are to lead us into evil. The person who uses this prayer aright is afraid of sin; knows the plague of his own heart; the power of his corruption; the snares of the world; and the devices of the devil; and he offers up this petition to God, that he would keep him out of the way of such trials as would be too hard for him, or grant sufficient strength to resist and overcome the devil; "*the evil one*;" the wicked one; the great tempter, who "goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." But this must be accompanied with *watching*, and avoiding all wilful occasions of sin, or else words do but mock God.

VIII. The conclusion of the prayer is—*For thine is the kingdom, and the power,*

and the glory, for ever. Amen. This shows why we should pray to God; and why we may hope to be heard. The *kingdom* is his. God is king of all the world, and has a right to dispose of all things in it. The *power* is his, as well as the authority; whatever our wants are, he can supply them; whoever our enemies are, he can subdue them. He therefore can answer our prayers; and as a loving Father we hope he *will*. His then will be the *glory*. Whatever God does is for his own glory; and if we are disposed to give him all the glory of what he does for us, we may hope that our petitions will be granted. This kingdom, this power, this glory are *for ever*; he will never want the power to help; and if we are saved, we shall never cease to give him praise.

The force of the whole prayer lies in the *first* and *last* words of it—*Our Father, and Amen.* In the *first* we apply to God in Christ, as reconciled to us; in the *last*, we set our seal to the whole, and say, *Amen: so let it be; so we humbly hope, it shall be* for Christ's sake.

APPLICATION.

How awfully is this prayer abused! Ignorant people use it as a kind of charm; and think it enough to say the words, without considering the meaning. O beware, as you love your souls, of mocking God by thoughtless praying. Can you call *him* a father, while you obey the devil? Will you say "hallowed be thy name," and yet you profane it daily? What do you care for *his kingdom*, while you belong to another? or talk of God's will without wishing to do it? Do you not forget him when you eat and drink? Are you not careless about the forgiveness of your sins, adding daily to the dreadful debt; and perhaps living in malice and wrath? How can you pray that God will not lead you into temptation, when you run wilfully into the way of it; frequenting the alehouse, the playhouse, the fair, the wakes, and the company of the lewd, the profane, and the drunken? Dear fellow-creature, permit me to say, that thus contradicting your prayers by your life, you cannot expect to be heard; nay, God may justly say to you at last, "Out of thine own mouth will I condemn thee, thou wicked servant." But God forbid! Think over this prayer before you use it again; and beg of God to enable you to use it with understanding and sincerity, that the rich blessings asked for in it may be yours, and God be glorified in your everlasting salvation.

Those who are "born of God," and have

"the spirit of grace and supplication," teaching them to pray, will not confine themselves at all times to these words; yet they may be used with great comfort and edification. God is your father; he is more disposed to give than you to ask; plead that dear relation. Let his glory be your first desire; the increase of his kingdom your highest wish. Let his will be done in love, by saints below as well as those above: then fear not to depend on his providence for daily supplies. "There is forgiveness with him, that he may be feared; and he that is for us is greater than he who is against us. Though surrounded with snares, his sheep are in his hand: and they shall be kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation. Then shall prayer be turned into praise; and all the ransomed of the Lord shall unite in full chorus, and say,—*"Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen, and Amen."*

PRAYER.—OUR Father which art seated on a throne of glory in the highest heavens, help us to bow before thee with the deepest reverence, and at the same time with filial confidence, believing that thou art able and willing to supply all our wants.

We desire to glorify thy great name, May the whole race of mankind pay that dutiful veneration to thy divine Majesty which thy matchless perfections so justly demand.

May the kingdom of grace, which thy dear Son came to introduce among men, be more fully established, and more widely extended, until all the kingdoms of this world shall be included in it.

May thy will which is always wise, holy and good, be done by men on earth, as it is done by angels in Heaven; and may we mortals ever submit to it with becoming reverence and resignation.

Give us this day our daily bread. We would not seek the great things of this life; but we humbly desire a competent supply for our present necessities, leaving future provision to thy paternal care.

And though we have, in many respects, acted like disobedient children, yet we beseech thee, O merciful Father, for Christ's sake, to forgive all our sins, and blot out all our debts from the book of thy remembrance, even as we, by thy grace, freely forgive our fellow-creatures who have offended us.

And we pray to be kept from such circumstances as might render temptation exceedingly dangerous and hard to be withstood; and if we are so tempted, deliver us by thy mighty power from the evil one, the tempter, that he may not prevail and triumph over us.

And these things we are encouraged to ask, for thou art the supreme king of the world; thou hast almighty power to help us; and to thee be ascribed the glory of infinite perfection, and everlasting praise. Amen.

SERMON XV.

THE DANGER OF FORMALITY AND HYPOCRISY.

Matt. vii. 21.—Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven! but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven.

WE have before us an eternal world, in which there are but two states, the one inexpressively happy, the other inconceivably wretched; and in one of these each of us must very soon be fixed.—But, *in which?*—It is impossible we can be indifferent about knowing in which, when an hour, a moment, may place us in one of them? Perhaps you will say, How can a person know? I answer, it may be known; clearly known by the word of God; for in the Scriptures the characters of saints and sinners are exactly drawn. It is plainly laid down who shall go to heaven, and who shall go to hell; and having this rule, we are often exhorted to try ourselves by it; "to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith;" and thus, "to make our calling and election sure." The words of the text are of this nature: and you will remember that they are the words of Jesus Christ, who is to be our judge: so that the same lips, which declared this to us, will pronounce upon each of us the sentence of life or death. O that we may now learn, what all the world shall then learn, that true religion does not consist in words, or professions of regard to Christ, or in gifts, or zeal, or usefulness; but in doing the will of God from the heart.

I. We learn from these words, that at *the great day there will be an earnest desire in many to enter into the kingdom of heaven.* By the "kingdom of heaven" is sometimes intended the kingdom of grace in the church of Christ on earth; but here it means the state of glory above, where Jesus shall reign in all his divine glory, and all his subjects enjoy perfect bliss. That this is referred to appears from the next verse—"Many will say unto me *in that day*, Lord, Lord." In *that day*; it is not said in *what day*: nor was there any need to say *what day*; for all the disciples of Christ know what is meant by it. They are often thinking on that day, when they shall "see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great glory;" "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with all his mighty angels in flaming fire." This is called *the great day*; a day of the greatest grandeur, a day of the greatest joy, and a day of the greatest terror. It is

also called *the day of the Lord*, and *the day of Christ*. This is *man's* day; yea, the *devil's* day; when sinners triumph, and Satan reigns; but the triumph of the wicked is short, and the prince of this world shall be judged.

O how careless are most people now about this great day. Scoffers abound in these latter times, and say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" Now and then, indeed, a just concern has prevailed for a season: as under John's ministry, "the kingdom of heaven suffered violence, and all men were for pressing into it." When a nation has been frightened by an earthquake or a plague, multitudes have been alarmed for a while. A few years ago thousands followed Mr. Whitfield into the open fields to hear the word; and we have read of great awakenings in this and other countries. O that we could now see the same! O that now when the judgments of the Lord are abroad in the earth, this sinful nation would learn righteousness!

But O, how will it be when the day comes? How will it be when the trumpet shall sound? What terror will seize the heart of the wicked man! Ah, he will say, Is the dreadful day come at last? the day I so often heard of, so often laughed at! O my folly! O my vain and hurtful lusts! For what have I lost my soul! For the sake of my business, my pleasures, my companions, I have lost my soul, my heaven, my all. O that I never had been born! But, perhaps, recovering himself a little, he may say—Am not I a Christian; was I not baptized and confirmed, and did I not take the Sacrament? Lord, Lord, open to me; but it will be too late; the door is shut; many will *then* seek to enter in, but shall not be able. The judge will *profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye workers of iniquity*. And this leads us to observe in the next place, that,

II. *A mere profession of religion will then be found insufficient*. The judgment of men carries it now; but it is a small matter to be judged of man's judgment. Man looks only at the outward appearance, but the Lord searcheth the heart; and he will then make the result of his search public. The young man may now rejoice in his youthful lusts and pleasures: he may walk in the way of his heart, and in the sight of his eyes; but let him know, and O that he may consider it, that "for all these things, God will bring him into judgment," Eccles. xi. 9. Yea, God will bring every *secret thing* into judgment; what is spoken in the ear in the closet shall be proclaimed on the house-top; and then shall

the secrets of all hearts be made manifest. Then shall many that were first be last; and many that were last shall be first. Then shall the hypocrites be detected and exposed. Then shall a separation be made between the tares and the wheat; between the sheep and the goats; between the foolish and the wise virgins. Then shall he say to poor vain formalists, *I never knew you, &c.* But let us more particularly examine the pretensions of these people.

It should seem that they used to *pray*; they used to say, Lord, Lord! It is certainly a bad sign for any one that he does not pray; and it is generally a good sign when a person does pray; but it is not a certain sign of grace. "The wicked sometimes pour out a prayer when God's chastening hand is upon them." Afflictions will sometimes extort prayers and vows, and many duties of religion; but when the affliction is over, there is an end of their devotion; and they return to their sins, as the dog to his vomit. So there may be transient convictions of sin, and terrific fears of hell, especially in the time of sickness and apprehension of death; and these may lead not only to a temporary reformation, but to doing many things, as Herod did when he heard John gladly, and as numbers of persons in popish countries, who do penance for their sins; but there may be all this, and much more, while men remain workers of iniquity.

Again, these people appeared to be *zealous* in religion, as the repetition of the word, *Lord, Lord*, seems to intimate; and we find in the next verse, that they "prophesied in the name of Christ." Most of the prophets, especially the stated prophets, were "holy men;" but some, especially of the occasional ones, as Balaam, Saul, and Caiaphas, were wicked men. So were *some* of the first preachers of Christianity: and so are *many* now. This is an awful word for the carnal clergy of any church, and wicked preachers of any denomination; and it shows that zeal for religion is no proof of sincerity in it.

These men did more still;—"they cast out devils in Christ's name." When Christ was upon earth, and for some ages after, the devil was permitted to possess the bodies of men; but Christ and his apostles were able to cast them out; and so did common Christians for a long time after, by the mention of his name. But this and other extraordinary gifts were not confined to real Christians; wicked professors sometimes did it, and here, we see, boasted of it, and pleaded it; but the plea is not admitted. Other "wonderful works" they

also did; for so the Lord permitted, in order to promote the spread of Christianity; but what availed all this, while the devil was not cast out of their own hearts, and the wonderful works of God's grace had never been wrought in their own souls? Men may be famous and useful in the church, yet, after all, be "castaways."

These people also professed obedience to Christ; they called him Lord. He is "Lord of all." He has all power in heaven and earth; and to him every knee shall bow. But it is to no purpose to call him Master and Lord, if we do not the things which he commands. Christ is not deceived by compliments, and he will reject that false devotion which consists only in words. "Saying and doing are two things, often parted in the conversation of men. He that said, *I go, Sir*, never stirred a step." Matt. xxi. 30.

Now, notwithstanding all the professions of these people, it appears, from the words of Christ himself, that they were *workers of iniquity*. They loved sin, they lived in sin, they made a trade of sin; it was their calling and business, at which they daily worked, as a man at his proper trade. All this they did under the mask of religion, and are therefore rejected. *Depart from me, I never knew you.*

Observe here, my friends, the deceitfulness of sin, and the deceitfulness of the heart. Though these formal professors lived in sin, and must know they did so, yet they continued to depend on their outward forms, and to approach the bar of God with a lie in their right hands. Alas! how many deceivers live and die deceived, and their fatal mistake is never detected till it is past remedy! Just like the Jews of old, to whom St. Paul thus speaks, Rom. ii. 17. "Behold thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light to them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes; which has the form of knowledge, and of the truth in the law." These outward things the Jews rested in, presumed upon, and were proud of; while they were ignorant of the spiritual design of their own rites; and many of them so wicked, that "the name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles" by their sins. They were strangers to that important distinction which the apostle makes, ver. 28, 29, of that chapter, where he says, "He is not a Jew, which is one outward-

ly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the *flesh*; but he is a Jew, which is one *inwardly*; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God." Thus you see, there is a great difference between *outward* and *inward* religion; between the religion of form, and the religion of the heart. What circumcision, sacrifices, and the temple, were to the Jews of old, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and public worship, are to professing Christians now; and as the ignorant Jews put their trust in their church privileges, so many nominal Christians now; but if this be all, their praise will be, not of God, but of men only.

This is evident from our text, in which a claim on Christ, founded on these things, is rejected. *I never knew you*; that is, "I never esteemed or approved of you as my true disciples and servants; nor will I own or accept you as such. Depart from me: I now banish you from my blessed and glorious presence to everlasting misery and despair, O all ye wilful transgressors." How dreadful will that word *Depart* be! How did Peter dread the thought of departing from Christ, when, many of his disciples having forsaken him, he said to the Apostles, "*Will ye also go away?*" Peter in the name of the rest, replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." A holy soul dreads the idea of departing from Christ by apostasy; but how terrible will it be, to hear the great Judge command us to depart! God grant that now we may depart from all iniquity. If there be any iniquity in us which we know not, merciful Savior, discover it to us, and deliver us from it; and never let us hear thee say, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." We now proceed to the last and most pleasing part of our subject, and observe, in the

III^d place, *That all true and obedient believers will be admitted into the heavenly kingdom*. Here is our Lord's description of them, of every one of them; *He that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven*. The will of God cannot be known but by his word. The Scriptures are given us on purpose that we may know his will; and there are two principal things in the Scriptures, namely, what we are to *believe* concerning God, and the *duty* which he requires of us; or in other words, *Faith* and *Practice*; and both of these are equally necessary; for we can never do the will of God in holy obedience without first believing in God through

Jesus Christ; the whole of the Christian religion consisting in this *faith, which worketh by love.*

Faith is first necessary in order to obedience; so Christ taught the people, who asked him, *What must we do, that we may work the works of God?* John vi. 28, &c. *This is the work of God,* said he, *that ye believe on him whom he hath sent;* as if he had said, “the great and important duty which I am come to point out to you, and which leads the way to all others, and is necessary to the acceptance of your persons, and of all your obedience, and which therefore God commands, approves, and is the author of, is this, that ye cordially embrace, and yield yourselves up by faith to me, as the true Messiah, the only Mediator, according to the discoveries I make of myself, and of the way of salvation by me.” And St. John also says, 1 John iii. 23, *This is his commandment: That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ.* When people read or hear of the commandments, they think the ten commandments only are meant; but this is a great mistake, for the very first business of a poor guilty helpless sinner is, to come to Christ for salvation. We are not to suppose that we must first prepare, or make ourselves worthy, by sorrow for sin, purifying our hearts, or reforming our lives, before we may venture to trust in Christ; all these are the proper fruits and effects of faith. We must believe in him “*who justifieth the UNGODLY,*” and not think first to make ourselves godly, and then hope in him. Faith is the first work. Look to Jesus. Come to Jesus. Trust in Jesus; and then a good hope of pardoning mercy will incline the heart to love him, and hate every evil way. We cannot do good works till we are in Christ by faith, any more than the branch of a tree can produce fruit when separate from the stock. Christ is the vine, and we are the branches; and by virtue of union to him, we become fruitful in every good word and work.

This also is the will of God, even our sanctification. God is holy: therefore we must be holy. We are chosen in Christ unto sanctification and obedience. The Lord gives his people a new heart, upon which he writes his laws, and which, through his grace, become pleasant to them. Being crucified with Christ, the old man of sin is crucified. They reckon themselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive to God, through Christ Jesus our Lord. The daily inquiry of a new-born soul is, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to

do?” “Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God.” I will run in the way of thy commandments, when thou hast enlarged my heart.” And this disposition will show itself in all the relations and circumstances of life; in the family, the workshop, and in all common actions, as well as in the house of God. Whether we are husbands, wives, children, servants, subjects, filling up our places to God’s glory will be our constant aim. Particularly, shall we be desirous to fulfil the royal law of love to our brethren, on which great stress is laid in the New Testament; for the law, as far as it relates to our neighbor, is fulfilled in one word, *Love.*

Now persons of this character shall have an abundant entrance into the kingdom and glory of Jesus Christ. While formalists and hypocrites are shut out, the blessed Redeemer will smile upon thee, and say, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;” and he will mention, as the evidence of their election and fruit of their faith, the acts of Christian love which they performed to their hungry, thirsty, naked, sick, or imprisoned brethren; taking them as kindly as if they had been done to himself; “for inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.” See Matt. xxv. 34, &c.

APPLICATION.

AND now, my friends, having heard how awful the fate of mere formalists and hypocrites will prove at the great day, it surely becomes us seriously to examine of what kind our religion is. It plainly appears, from what has been said, “that the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power,” 1 Cor. iv. 20. And as they are many who have the form of godliness, but who deny the power of it, it is most necessary, as we value the salvation of our souls, to determine whether our religion is form or power, that so we may know whether the great Judge will own or disown us at the last. Consider, therefore, what your religion consists in, and what you depend upon. Is it that you were born and bred a Christian; that you were baptized; that you have gone to church, or meeting; that you can say the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Ten Commandments; that you have taken the Sacrament, been sorry for your sins, and do to others as you would be done by? Or that you have done your best, and put your trust in God? Are these your pleas? Is this your religion? Then, pardon me, if I speak the truth in love, and tell you, plainly, this will not do. These empty

boasts prove that you are a stranger to true heart religion. All these things you may imagine you have done; but if this be all, it is only crying, Lord, Lord. Had you gone much farther than this, and equalled the Pharisees in their zeal and devotion, all would be insufficient, without a conviction of your sin and misery; a heart humbled for your iniquities; a view of the only way of salvation through Jesus Christ; and that faith in him which purifies the heart, works by love, and overcomes the world. Be not deceived then. Satisfy yourselves with nothing short of that which Christ will accept and approve at last. This is doing the will of God: which will, as you have now heard, requires, in the first place, believing in the Lord Jesus Christ; coming to him as a guilty, helpless sinner, and receiving him as your wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Come, then, my fellow-sinner, to Jesus. Beg of him to teach you. Beg of him to wash you in his blood. Beg of him to give you his Spirit, and enable you, from a principle of love, to forsake every evil way, and cleave to him with purpose of heart. Then shall ye know that the "kingdom of God is not meat and drink," forms and ceremonies, "but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

Let me drop a word of *caution* to those who perhaps may boast that they are no hypocrites, for they do not pretend to any religion. Can you think that this will be admitted as an excuse? Will you dare to approach the awful bar of God, and plead, "Lord, I never pretended to serve thee! I never thought it worth my while to know or worship thee. I loved the world and my sins so well, that I lived like an Atheist." O Sirs, deceive not yourselves. Answer that question if you can, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Formalists and hypocrites pay some compliment to religion, by counterfeiting it, and imitating it; yet will they perish: but you despise it. You treat the blessed God and the gracious Savior as unworthy your notice. How then can you expect but to have your portion with hypocrites and unbelievers, and to be turned into hell with all those who forget God?

These words may probably be very alarming to the tender spirits of some who truly fear God. Some of the sincere and humble followers of the Lamb may be ready to fear, lest he should be angry with them at last, and say, "Depart, I never knew you." But, my dear brethren, tell me, is it not your heart's desire to know and do the will of God, particularly in

those two grand points, faith and holiness? Say, is not Jesus high in your esteem; the chief of ten thousand, and altogether lovely; and would not you gladly be conformed to him, in cheerfully doing and patiently suffering the will of God? Take courage, then. These words are as full of comfort for you, as they are full of terror to formalists and hypocrites. The Friend of sinners will say to his dear people, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, and for which my grace prepared your souls on earth. Enter into the joys of your Lord.

And now are any of you beginning to say, I fear I have been deceived. I fear my religion will not stand the test. I have mistaken the shadow for the substance; the shell for the kernel. What shall I do? I answer, it is an infinite mercy that you have discovered your mistake. You might have died deceived, and have been rejected by Christ. But it may be hoped that it is a token for good, and the dawn of mercy to your soul. Let your fears bring you to your knees, and at the throne of grace implore divine aid. Say, with the Psalmist, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any way of wickedness in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

PRAYER.—O God, the great Searcher of all hearts, suffer us not to deceive ourselves with a mere form of godliness, while strangers to its power. Let us not be found amongst Formalists or Hypocrites. May we take warning from that solemn word of admonition which we have just heard, and which proceeded originally from the lips of him who in the great decisive day will be our Judge! May we now truly know and diligently perform the will of God! May we, first of all, believe in Jesus, and receive him as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; and also be under the constant influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit, so that we may faithfully do the will of our Father who is in Heaven; and finally, in the day of judgment, be graciously admitted into the kingdom of glory, when the Lord of all shall say to his believing and obedient people, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world."

SERMON XVI.

THE PHARISEE AND PUBLICAN.

Luke xvi. 16.—God be merciful to me a sinner.

THERE is a time approaching, when MERCY will appear to all mankind the most valuable thing in the world. Figure to yourselves the awful hour, when you shall

be about to quit this mortal state, and launch into an unknown world; realize the still more awful moment, when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised; when the great white throne shall be erected, and the assembled world shall appear before the universal Judge; when the grand separation shall be made between the righteous and the wicked; the one being placed at the right hand, the other at the left of Christ—then, my friends, then will the full value of *mercy* be known. O what a word will *mercy* be then; a world for *mercy* then! “Vessels of *mercy*,” obtainers of *mercy*—how will they shout and sing, “O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his *mercy* endureth for ever.” While others, in all the bitterness of fruitless woe, shall cry, O that we had but known the need of *mercy*, the way of *mercy*, and the value of *mercy*, while it might have been had! But now the door is shut; the mercies of God are clean gone for ever, and he will be favorable no more.

With this amazing scene in prospect, let us address ourselves to the text, and to the parable of the Pharisee and Publican, of which it is a part. The *introduction* to it, and the *conclusion* of it, will be the best key to its true meaning. Ver. 9. “Our Savior spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.” Here are two bad things in their character. 1. *They trusted in themselves*—which no man can do, if he knows the holy law of God; and 2. *They despised others*, which we cannot do, if we know our own hearts. The conclusion shows how God dislikes such people, while he accepts a poor dejected sinner; for “every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” Ver. 14.

“Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a Publican.” Ver. 10. The Pharisees were a sect of people in those days in high repute for religion; they separated themselves from others, as if more holy: they distinguished themselves by peculiar zeal for ceremonies; but many of them were rank hypocrites, neglecting the religion of the heart, and indulging themselves in cruelty and oppression. The Publican also appeared at the same place, at the same time, and on the same errand; but how different their characters! Had we seen them both together, we should perhaps have thought far better of the Pharisee than of the Publican; “for man look-

eth only at the outward appearance, but God looketh at the heart.” Very different motives brought them here. The Pharisee came because it was a public place, and he wished to be seen and admired; the Publican came because it was “a house of prayer,” and he wanted to pour forth his soul before God. Thus, my friends, in all our places of worship there is a mixture of characters; but let us remember, God is the searcher of the heart, and he knows what brings us to his house.

Ver. 11. “The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself;—he stood *by himself*, with great formality, in a place where the people must notice him; he prayed thus *with himself*, and *to himself*, not to God: Ah, Sirs, there are many people who pray to themselves; they speak not to God; their words never reach him; they utter sounds, but not desires; this praying will do no good. It is remarkable, that in all the Pharisee’s prayer there is not one petition: he came to pray; but surely he forgot his errand, for he asks nothing. Praise to God is certainly a proper and a noble part of prayer; but though he pretends to praise, he only boasts. But let us hear his fine prayer; “God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are.” What is this but ignorance, pride, and censoriousness? Besides, he begins his prayer with a lie. He was as other men are, for all men are sinners; in this respect all are on a level: *there is no difference*, as the Scripture speaks, Rom. iii. 22, 23. It is true that some men are restrained from sins that others commit; but the seeds of every sin are by nature in the heart of every man; and if we have not actually committed them, we owe it to the restraining power or the changing grace of God. The Pharisee seems to admit of this, by saying, “God, I thank thee;” but we have reason to doubt his sincerity in so saying; and to think they were words of course and form; for so proud a heart as his could not be duly sensible of his obligations to divine grace; and there are many, who, like him, use words of praise, but feel no gratitude to God. His meaning was probably this, “O God, thou Author of my being, I thank thee for the noble powers with which thou hast endowed me, by my own wise and careful improvement of which I have kept myself from being so wicked as other people.”

You will observe, that there were two principal parts of the law; the one respected morals, the other ceremonials. Now the Pharisee takes care to brag of his regard to both; and first, to the moral

law, *I am not as other men are*—well, what are other men? Why, according to his account, it should seem that most other men are *extortioners, unjust, adulterers*. At all times there are too many such people as these; but his way of mentioning them was merely for the purpose of exalting himself and his own sect, some of whom were equally criminal, though under the mask of religion. It may be the Pharisee was not an “extortioner,”—did not cruelly oppress his neighbor; but we have Christ’s authority for it, that the Pharisees were generally “covetous,” and some of them “devoured widows’ houses.” He says he was not “unjust”—not a knave, or a cheat: but could he say he had never coveted his neighbor’s goods? for this is heart-robbery in the sight of God. He says he was not an “adulterer;” it may be so; but our Lord says, that “he who looketh upon a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery already with her in his heart.” Matt. v. 28. But this was the folly of such men; they washed the outside of the cup and the platter, but *within* they were “full of extortion and excess; righteous without, but full of hypocrisy and iniquity within;” so Christ declares, Matt. xxiii. 26, &c.

Not content with boasting of himself, he must abuse the poor Publican.—“I am not as this Publican. What business had he with the Publican? He ought to have rejoiced to see him in the temple; he might have hoped it was a symptom of his reformation. He should have gone and shook hands with him, and given him some good advice. But his proud heart spurns at the broken-hearted sinner; just as modern Pharisees, who look upon mourning souls as poor, canting, whining hypocrites, far beneath their notice. There was a great deal of cruelty in this; he could not say his own prayers, without putting in a caveat, as it were, against the petition of his poor neighbor.

But the Pharisee has yet more to boast of. He had not only “done nobody any harm,” as the vulgar phrase is, but he had been mighty religious; he kept *Lent all the year*. *I fast*, said he, *twice a week*. Occasional fasting, in order to humble ourselves before God for our sins, is very commendable, whether by private persons or public bodies; but the Pharisee’s fasting was not for that purpose, but for ostentation, and with a view to merit at the hand of God, as appears by his boasting of it. Besides this, he tells God, *he gave tithes of all he possessed*; not only of what the law of Moses required, but of the herbs in

his garden; he devoted a tenth part of all he had to religious uses, whether titheable or not by the law.

Thus you have the Pharisee’s prayer; a prayer which God rejected; for though he justified himself, God did not justify him. And now, my friends, let us examine ourselves! Is there nothing of the Pharisee’s spirit in us? Do we not hear people speaking the same language sometimes? Is not this all the hope of some persons, that they never did any person harm; that they pay every one his due; and perhaps that they go to church constantly, behave decently, take the sacrament, give alms; and so on? How often do we hear this language on a dying bed! Poor ignorant souls rush into the presence of God with no other foundation for their hope than the Pharisee had; while we hear not a word of true humility, poverty of spirit, sense of sin, or hope in Jesus, as the sinner’s only friend and hope. O Sirs, beware of resembling the Pharisee. Pleas like his may please men, but they will not succeed with God: rather let us resemble the poor broken-hearted Publican, whose character and prayer we next consider.

V. 13. “And the Publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” By a *Publican* you are not to understand the keeper of a public-house, but a tax-gatherer. The Jews were, at this time, subject to the Roman emperor, and paid him taxes, which were sometimes farmed by the rich publicans, who, in the execution of their office, were too often dishonest and oppressive; on account of which, and on account of the taxes themselves, which were vexatious to the Jews, the name of a publican was abominable, and was classed with those of harlots and sinners.

Whether this Publican was an extortioner, or not, we cannot say. Doubtless he was a sinner; and by some means or other he became a convinced sinner, a penitent sinner, and a praying sinner. Perhaps this was the first time that ever he prayed in his life; for sinning generally keeps men from praying. It is plain that the Spirit of God had humbled his heart; and he was one of those blessed men, who are “poor in spirit,” and he was one of those blessed mourners, who “shall be comforted.”

Observe his posture—he *stood afar off*—at a great distance from the holy place, where the priest officiated; he knew this became him, for he had lived at a great distance from God as a sinner; and he

knew he deserved that God should for ever behold him afar off.

Observe also his dejected looks: he could not look up; he thought it would be presumptuous in him to lift up his eyes to heaven, the habitation of God's glory. Other sinners have thought the same; David says, Ps. xl. 12. "Innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up;" but those down-cast eyes attracted the eyes of God; he could not lift up his eyes, but he lifted up his heart; and there is no beauty in the sight of God greater than blushing for sin. "For to this man will I look," saith the Lord, "even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Isa. lxxv. 2.

Another mark of his repentance was his *smiting his breast*; he knew his heart; he did not think it a *good heart*, as some very ignorant people speak; no, he knew the plague of his heart; he knew it was the seat and source of all his sins, and by smiting on his breast he seemed as if he would take revenge upon his own wicked heart; it expresses his indignation against himself, and the vehemence of his anger against sin. Men and brethren, what do you know of such a disposition as this? When were you thus angry with yourselves, and filled with shame and confusion of face because of your sins? Know this, that such is the temper of all who are taught of God; and if you have never felt in this manner, you are yet strangers to true repentance.

Now we come to his prayer. It was very short, but very good; no man ever offered a better, or to better purpose. Not that the mere words are of any avail: too many people use such words profanely, when they say, on a surprise, God bless us! or Lord have mercy on us! but such praying as this is the way to get a curse, not a blessing. When the Publican said, God be merciful to me, a sinner, he felt what he said: he felt he was a perishing sinner, and he felt an earnest desire for mercy.

He calls himself, *a sinner*, or *the sinner*, as some would render it; or *the chief of sinners*, as Paul called himself. The word *sinner* was a term of reproach among the Jews, and seemed to be applied chiefly to a harlot, or some notorious offender; but the Publican takes it to himself. It is very likely he spake this aloud in the hearing of the Pharisee, and others who did not think themselves sinners; for he was not unwilling to appear before men

what he well knew he was before God. He would not have been angry with that sort of preaching which lays men low; nor would he have been displeased with a friend who should have said, You are a very great sinner. But say, my friends, what would *you* think of a person who shall charge *you* in that manner? Would you not be very angry, and say, I am no worse than others. But a true penitent can never find words sufficient to express the sense he has of his vileness.

If we know the meaning and extent of the Ten Commandments, we shall say after each of them, "Lord have mercy upon us!" And if we see any thing of the holiness, majesty, and glory of the great God, we shall cry, with Isaiah, "Woe is me, for I am undone;" or with Job, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." No person truly enlightened will say, as many have done, I am not a great sinner; for, in fact, there cannot be a little sinner, unless there were a little law to break, a little God to offend, and a little wrath to incur. It is too common for persons to comfort themselves with the idea that they are not such great sinners as some others; many dying people do this, and even wretches at the gallows have done so. But this is very absurd; for the question is, not whether we have sinned as much as others, but whether we have sinned at all; that is, whether we have broken the holy law of God! If so, we are sinners, and stand exposed to the just wrath of the Most High; nor can we escape it but by partaking of that great mercy for which the Publican prayed.

You will next observe, that his sense of sin and danger put him upon prayer. Many people live without prayer; and what is the reason? They do not feel the need of mercy; for this is the first thing a convinced sinner prays for; and it is a good sign of grace, when a desire for mercy sends a man to his knees. Angels rejoice on such an occasion, and point to the newborn soul, saying, "Behold, he prayeth!" My friends, do you pray for mercy? If not, how can you expect it; and what must become of you without it? O that you may begin to pray!

This poor man cried to the Lord; and whither can a creature fly for help but to God? He is our maker; he is our governor; he is our just Judge; he is able to save or destroy: he is offended with our sins, yet is he most gracious, and ready to forgive. How reasonable, then, that a

guilty, helpless sinner, ready to perish, should apply "to him that is able to save to the uttermost all who come to him by Jesus Christ."

He begs for *MERCY*. What is mercy? We know what it is by our own feelings. It is compassion to the miserable; it is a disposition to pity and relieve the distressed; and we never speak of *mercy* but with reference to *misery*. It is not, then, a light unfeeling use of solemn words, that can encourage us to hope for mercy: it is not saying, without feeling, Lord have mercy upon us! Christ have mercy upon us! but it is coming with the Publican's spirit, with his broken heart, with his remorse, with his desires, and in earnest prayer claiming this precious blessing.

Observe it is *mercy* he asks. Here is not a word of *merit*. Mercy and merit are opposite things. The Pharisee's prayer was a mere boast of meritorious deeds; the Publican has nothing to plead; nor does he ask for wealth, or honor, or pleasure; his heart is dead to these: all his desires centre in one, and that one is mercy.

"Mercy, good Lord, mercy I ask,
This is the total sum;
For mercy, Lord, is all my suit;
O let thy mercy come!"

But the petition, *be merciful*, includes something more than is commonly understood by it; the word translated *merciful* has respect to the atonement made by blood; to the sacrifice offered up at the temple; which were types of Christ, "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood." Rom. iii. 25. At the temple, in the court of which the Publican stood, there was a lamb offered every morning at nine o'clock, and every evening at three; and these were the hours of prayer; so that the pious Jews came then to pray, that by virtue of the atonement of Christ represented by blood, and of his intercession represented by the incense, their prayers might find acceptance. His prayer then was—God be propitious to me a sinner—accept the atonement in my behalf—let my soul be cleansed in the blood of Christ. In this manner, by faith in Jesus, let us seek the mercy of God. Let us not dream of mere absolute mercy. "A God all mercy is a God unjust." The mercy of God cannot be bestowed without regard to his justice. Now God has glorified his justice by punishing sin in the person of our glorious Redeemer, upon whom "he laid the iniquities of us all," and through whom he is, at once "a just God and a Savior." In

this way, and in no other, can a sinner obtain mercy; for our Lord declares, that no man cometh to the Father but by him; and no mercy cometh to the sinner but through him; but in his dear name we may "come boldly to the throne of grace, and so obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need."

Thus came the Publican, and in this way he succeeded. It was not the depth of his humility, the sincerity of his repentance, nor the fervency of his devotion, that merited acceptance; these dispositions were the gifts of God, and could merit nothing; but it was the merit of the Redeemer's precious blood, typified by the blood of lambs, which he pleaded, and which shall never be pleaded in vain. Our Lord tells us, ver. 14, "This man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other," or *not the other*; the reason of which he adds, "For every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." O what a blessing! "He went down to his house justified;" there was no condemnation to him; he was accepted in the Beloved; he had passed from death to life! Happy man! he might "eat his bread with gladness, and drink his wine," or water either, "with a merry heart, for God accepted his works."

APPLICATION.

SHALL we not then "go and do likewise?" Are we not sinners? Fly instantly to the throne of grace. The Lord waits to be gracious. This is the accepted time; lose it not by delay. To-morrow may be too late. Now, then, with the Publican's spirit, let each of us cry, God be merciful to me a sinner!

But O beware of the Pharisee's spirit. Every man is born a Pharisee. Ask your little children why they hope to go to heaven; and if they have not been better taught, you will find their hope is, because they are not so bad as others. Would to God it were not so with grown-up persons too! But let no one dare to persist in a self-righteous course; "for he that exalteth himself shall be abased"—abased even to hell. Renounce, then, your own righteousness, as St. Paul, the converted Pharisee, did, who says, Phil. iii. 7, "What things were *gain* to me, those I counted loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but *dung*, that I may win Christ, and be found in him."

The Publican's success is a great encouragement to every sensible sinner seek-

ing for mercy. Seek like him, and like him you shall obtain it. And O, let those who have obtained it be full of joy. "Praise the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever;" and as an evidence of having obtained mercy from God, show mercy to men. "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."

PRAYER.—O Lord God, bountiful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; thou keepest mercy for thousands, thou pardonest iniquity, transgression, and sin; neither dost thou retain thy anger, for ever, because thou delightest in mercy. Look down in that mercy on us, who now humbly lift up our hearts unto thee. We, like the penitent Publican of whom we have heard, would approach thee, deeply sensible of the sin of our nature and of the sin of our lives: and with broken hearts and contrite spirits, would cry, "God be merciful to us sinners!" We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, which we from time to time most grievously have committed, by thought, word, and deed, against thy Divine Majesty: provoking most justly thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, and are heartily sorry for these our misdoings: the remembrance of them is grievous unto us; the burden of them is intolerable. Have mercy upon us, have mercy upon us most merciful Father. For thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake forgive us all that is past, and grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please thee in newness of life, to the honor and glory of thy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

SERMON XVII.

ZEAL FOR THE SALVATION OF SINNERS.

Romans x. 1.—Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

TRUE religion consists chiefly in *love to God*, and *love to man*; and wherever one of these is found there is the other also. It was love that brought the Savior down from the throne of glory to this mean and wretched world, that he might "seek and save those who were lost." While he lived on earth, "he went about doing good;" and when he returned to heaven he commanded his ministers and people to follow his example, and to do good to all men as they had opportunity. The Apostles and first Christians gladly obeyed, and were very active in spreading abroad the knowledge of their gracious Master and his great salvation. Among these, St. Paul was one of the most zealous, as his great labors and affectionate writings fully testify. Our text is an expression of his strong desires for the salvation of Israel, or the Jews, who were his countrymen; and the particular reason of his anxiety

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about them was, because he knew they were not in the way to obtain salvation. It is true, they had a zeal for religion, but it was not a zeal according to knowledge. They were under a very fatal mistake, which was their seeking salvation by their own works, for "they stumbled at that stumbling stone," as, alas! many people called Christians do still. Knowing therefore their danger of being eternally lost, he expresses his feelings in these words—"My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." And will you, my friends, who live in this place, permit us to say that we hope and trust we are moved by the same desire? If any person should inquire, and it is natural and proper for them to inquire, why we come here to pray and sing, and read a sermon; we humbly reply, for no other reason upon earth than this, that we may promote your salvation; that we may stir you up to consider your need of it; that we may show you, from the Gospel, the only true way of it; and that we may put you upon seeking it immediately.

We purpose to show you from these words,

I. That serious Christians plainly see the dangerous state in which many of their neighbors are.

II. That they earnestly desire their deliverance from it.

I. We observe, that serious Christians plainly perceive the dangerous state of unconverted sinners around them. We cannot tell what the grace of God may do hereafter for the worst of men; and the conditions of some may be doubtful; but in many cases, it is too evident that men "are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity," as St. Peter said to Simon Magus: at least, so much may be discovered as fully warrants our fears on their behalf. Now this sad condition of men appears,

1. *From their living in open sin*: for indeed, "some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment," some proclaim their sin as Sodom, and glory in their shame. St. Paul says, "the works of the flesh are manifest," among which he names "adultery, fornication, uncleanness, wrath, murder, and drunkenness." Gal. v. 19. Our Savior has directed us to judge of men by their fruits; "for every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit;" and he adds, (observe his solemn words,) "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." Matt. vii. 17. We are forced to conclude,

therefore, that "if men live after the flesh, they must die;" that if they proceed in the broad road, it must be to destruction; and that "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Some men are evidently "men of the world," "servants of sin," and captives of Satan; such to whom our Lord said, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." When we see persons living in sinful pleasure, we know, "they are dead while they live." How can we suppose the profane swearer has the fear of God, or that the Sabbath-breaker has any regard for his soul?

2. *Carelessness about religion* is another alarming symptom of a graceless, and therefore, dangerous, state. There are many who have no concern about their souls or salvation. Like Gallio, they care for none of these things. But this carelessness is as strong a proof of being in a state of nature and of wrath, as living in open sin is; for it is written, Heb. ii. 3, "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" To neglect this salvation is to omit all those duties which are necessary to a profitable hearing and keeping the word preached. How many are there, who every sabbath turn their backs on the house of God, where his Gospel is preached, and spend the day in idleness and sinful pleasure! How many are there, who are able to read the Bible, but who never look into that sacred book, that they may become wise to salvation! How many are there who never lift up their hearts to God, in prayer for his teaching and his mercy! Now, how shall such escape? Those who despised the law of Moses died without mercy; but to despise the Gospel is a greater crime, and deserves a greater punishment. Those who seek not mercy now, according to the Gospel, shall never have it. "This is the acceptable time; this is the day of salvation:" if this be neglected, let poor sinners expect no more to hear of mercy through all eternity.

3. *Formality in religion* is another evidence of being in a dangerous condition. There are some, who dare not omit all religious duties, public and private; but they are like the Pharisees, "who drew nigh to God with their mouth, and honored him with their lips, but their heart was far from him;" by many religious ceremonies "they washed the outside of the cup and platter, but within they were full of extortion and excesses." Matt. xv. and xxiii. How many say their prayers like parrots, without knowing their meaning! How many go to church only to see and be seen; and, when

they come away, are full of mirth and folly; thinking no more of what has passed, and spending the rest of the day in worldly conversation, or amusement! Others think, that because they belong to a good church, and have been baptized, and say their prayers, and take the sacrament, all is well with them; while they are strangers to *heart-work* in religion; were never alarmed on account of their sins; never humbled for their sins; never fled to Jesus for refuge from their sins; and never knew any thing of that great change of heart, called, in Scripture, regeneration, or the new birth. Now, when we see our neighbors content with this poor empty form of godliness, and denying the power thereof, we cannot but be deeply concerned on account of their danger.

4. There is another thing which alarms us on their behalf; that is *when we see them receive, for truth, great and fundamental errors, as to the doctrine of religion*. We know it is commonly said, that it does not signify what a man believes, if he does but live a good life. But we testify against this opinion, as destructive of the souls of men. Did not the great Redeemer come into the world to enlighten it? Is he not the great Teacher, who, by his word and Spirit, reveals the will of God for our salvation? Has he not promised his people that they shall "know the truth, and the truth shall make them free?" And has he not said that his sheep hear and know his voice, but will not follow the voice of a stranger? How then can error be harmless? The Scripture speaks of "damnable heresies" as well as damnable vices. Surely, it is of great importance that we have right views of the blessed God, as to his holiness, justice, and mercy; that we might have right views of ourselves, as fallen, guilty, helpless sinners; and especially that we have right views of Jesus Christ, and of the nature and way of salvation through him by faith. It was the want of these that made St. Paul use the words of our text. The Jews rejected Christ and his righteousness, and "went about to establish their own righteousness," ver. 3; thus they stumbled at Christ; and St. Paul knew, that if they died in this state they must perish for ever: and this led him to say, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." And this leads us to observe, in the next place,

II. *That serious Christians earnestly and sincerely desire the salvation of their neighbors, whom they thus perceive to be in a dangerous state.*

If love to our neighbors requires that we should pity and help them in time of sickness, poverty, or any other kind of temporal distress, how much more then should we care for his soul, and labor to prevent his eternal ruin! All the love and politeness that worldly men show to their neighbors is for the perishing body; while they care not for the soul, but perhaps contribute much to its eternal destruction. But if the love of God be shed abroad in our heart, the salvation of souls will be the first object we have in view, and happy shall we be, if we can in any wise be instruments in their future happiness; for,

1. *We tremble to think of their future misery.* We know assuredly, that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." Rom. i. 18. We certainly know that all men are born in sin, and are children of wrath; and that without an interest in Christ by faith, and a heart changed by grace, no man shall see the Lord; that the "wrath of God abideth on every unbeliever," and that "he will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every man who dies in his sins," impenitent, unpardoned, unrenewed. Now, can we think of our relations, our friends, our neighbors, being in this state, without pitying them, praying for them, and exhorting them to "fly from the wrath to come?" It is impossible! If any man can, how dwelleth the love of God in him? When our compassionate Savior paid his last visit to Jerusalem, and from a hill beheld that great and wicked city, which, on account of unbelief, was to be destroyed in about forty years, he wept over it; though then surrounded with a multitude, crying "Hosanna," he lamented over it with tears, saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." Luke xix. 42. And may not we be permitted, with some small portion of the same love and compassion to our perishing neighbors, to say, O how happy would it be for you, now to know those things, which are necessary to your present peace and everlasting salvation; lest, ere long, God should deprive you of the means of grace, and give you up to the blindness of your minds and the hardness of your hearts! It would shock us beyond measure to see one of you burning in a great fire, were it but for a few minutes; but who can think without horror of everlasting burnings? We therefore would, as St. Jude speaks, ver. 22, "save you with fear, pulling you out of the

fire;" or, as St. Paul speaks, 2 Cor. v. 10, 11, "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men."

2. As we wish to prevent your future destruction, so likewise we earnestly desire that you may share with us in the joys and glories of the heavenly world. We believe "there is a reward for the righteous;" that "the pure in heart shall see God;" that "in his presence is fullness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore." We believe that Christ is gone to heaven to prepare mansions for his people, and that in due time, they shall be with him, to behold his glory, to enter into his rest, to sit down with him on his throne, and to wear a crown of glory. We humbly hope, through Jesus, to partake of these blessings, and we would gladly take all the world along with us. We are grieved to think that any should despise the good land, slight the invitations to Heaven, or expect it on false grounds. We are grieved to think that so many cleave to the dust, and, for the sake of the short-lived pleasures of sin, and a portion of this world, are in danger of losing eternal joys. This therefore puts us upon urging you to seek first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, that you may also be admitted into the kingdom of glory.

3. We wish you to know and enjoy the present pleasures of true religion. Let strangers to godliness say what they please, we maintain that the ways of wisdom are pleasantness, and her paths are paths of peace. Some of us have tried both the pleasures of sin and the pleasures of religion, and we are bold to say, there is more satisfaction in one hour's communion with God, than in days and months of sinful indulgence. We can say, with David, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." A good hope through grace, a knowledge of the pardon of our sins, a persuasion of the favor of God towards us, a belief that all things are working together for our good, and that we shall go to heaven when we die; together with the actual delight we find in prayer, praise, hearing, reading, and conversation with the people of God—these are joys that satisfy and sanctify the mind, and, compared to which, all the frothy mirth and carnal pleasures of the wicked are mean as the toys of children, and hurtful as the sports of madmen. We wish you therefore, brethren, to be partakers of the grace of God, and we say to you, as Moses to

Hobab, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." Numb. x. 29.

4. We wish the salvation of others *on account of the glory of God*, for which we feel ourselves concerned, and which will be promoted thereby. We are taught to pray, "hallowed be thy name." Let God be glorified! And surely, when a poor sinner ceases to be a rebel to his Maker, throws himself at the feet of mercy, and swears allegiance to the God of his salvation, the Lord is glorified. Satan loses another subject, and one is added to the kingdom of Jesus. The love of Christ constraineth us, and our loyalty to the King of heaven makes us long to see his kingdom flourish. We cannot tell of how great importance may be the value of one converted soul: a wife, a husband, the children of the family, the servants, the connexions, may all be the better for it; the gospel may be spread; more souls may be converted; and generations yet unborn may derive benefit from it. We would therefore compass sea and land to make one proselyte, not to our party, or any particular sect, but that Jesus may be exalted: "for blessed be his glorious name for ever, and let the whole earth be filled with this glory. Amen and Amen." Ps. lxxii. 19.

5. Again, we wish for the salvation of sinners for the sake of the good of the nation where we dwell. True Christians are the salt of the earth, that keep it from perishing: Sodom would have been preserved from destruction, if ten righteous men could have been found in it. And may we not say, in these threatening times, "Except the Lord had left us a seed, we had been as Sodom, and been made like unto Gomorrah?" Rom. ix. 29. The prayers of God's people are a greater defence to their country than all its fleets and armies: and that kingdom is most likely to flourish, in which truth and righteousness most abound.

6. To say the truth, we are not without a little selfishness in this matter: for, beside all the reasons before mentioned, *we have some view to our own peace and happiness*. We do find that "the meanest service of Christ has refreshment in it. Our good Master sends not his servants on a warfare at their own charge. He that watereth the souls of others shall himself be watered. We think the conversion of a soul to God is the greatest honor and happiness, next to our own salvation, that we can enjoy; and though we know that no man has any claim upon God for what he does, all being unprofitable servants,

that the best action of man has no merit in it, yet we believe that there is a reward of grace for the faithful servants of Christ, who has promised that so small a gift as a cup of cold water given to any one, because he belongs to Christ, shall not be forgotten; and as to those whom he employs in his work, "they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever." Dan. xii. 3.

Let us now show in what manner a desire for the salvation of sinners ought to be expressed; for this desire, when true, will not be idle, but active, and will put persons on earnest endeavors to accomplish it; and

1. *By prayer*. The conversion of a soul, like the creation of the world, is the work of God alone. A real Christian is a new creature, "born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John i. 13. St. Paul, therefore, in our text, mentions, not only his "heart's desire," but "his prayer to God" also. Those who truly pray for themselves, will pray for others too. If a husband or a wife has a partner who knows not the Lord, prayer will be immediately offered. If a parent has an ungodly child, like Abraham, he will cry, O that Ishmael might live before thee! or like the poor man, Matt. xvii. 15, Lord, have mercy upon my son. Thus Job rose early in the morning, and offered up ten offerings for his ten children; because he feared they had sinned against God in their feasts with each other.

2. *We should urge our friends to come and hear the gospel*. Do not be ashamed to invite them to hear that word, which God has made his power to your salvation. When Christ called Andrew to be his disciple, Andrew soon invited his brother Peter; and the day after, when Christ called Philip, Philip presently findeth Nathaniel, and invited him to come and hear Jesus. So, when the Lord sent Peter to preach to Cornelius, a Roman officer, he found Cornelius had called together his kinsmen and friends, and they were all gathered together in a private house, as you may be here, to hear all things which God had commanded Peter to preach. O how many have had reason to bless God for ever, that some kind friend first invited them to go and hear a gospel sermon! Practise this, my friends; all of you, who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, say to others, "O taste and see, that the Lord is good." Sinners, as you all know, are very active to bring others into sin, and to invite them to plays and merry meetings; why should

not we be more active to save souls, than sinners are to destroy them?

3. There is another way in which we should show our desire for the salvation of our fellow-creatures, and that is, *by the Christian education of children*, our own, and our neighbor's. Abraham was commended of God for this.—“I know him, said the Lord, that he will command his children and his household after him;” and parents were ordered, by the law, Deut. vi. 7, “to teach their children the words of God diligently; to talk of them when they sat down in the house, when they walked by the way, when they lay down, and when they rose up.” If parents wish well to the souls of their children, they will try to inform their minds, bring them under the word, and restrain them as much as possible from sabbath-breaking, and other sins. And as there are some parents who will not, or cannot, instruct their own children, let us do what we can for them. Why should one of these little ones perish, while Sunday schools may be kept up? The Lord prosper this good work more and more. And to this we may add, constant regard to *family worship*, by those who are at the head of families. Surely, they have little regard to the souls of children and servants, who do not daily read the Scriptures, and pray with their families.

4. *Personal exhortation* is a great means of good to the souls of men. “Exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. How often has God blessed one sentence, spoken in his fear and love! A “word spoken in season, how good is it!” O let us try, whenever we can, mildly to reprove sin; and give a hint on all proper occasions, in companies, on journeys, at work, whereby we may prove, if the Lord bless it, the instrument of our neighbor's conversion.

5. To all this, one thing more must necessarily be added, and that is, *a holy life*. Actions speak louder than words. “Let our light shine before men, that they, seeing our *good works*,” as well as hearing our good words, “may glorify God.” There is a testimony for God in the life of a holy man, that the wicked may despise, but cannot resist. Thus let all Christians hold forth the word of life, “that so even the prejudiced, who will not hear the word, may, without the word, be won by our conversation.” 1 Pet. iii. 1.

APPLICATION.

Men and brethren: Is it the duty and practice of all real Christians to be thus affectionately concerned for the salvation

of others? Should you not be much more concerned for your own salvation; you, who have hitherto totally neglected it? O consider the value of your souls. Are you not sinners? And must you not soon receive the wages of your sins, unless they are pardoned for Christ's sake? And can you expect pardon without seeking it? O then be wise. Rouse yourselves from your dreadful stupidity. Cry to God for his mercy and grace, lest you perish. This is the day of salvation. To you is the word of salvation sent. O that it may not be sent in vain! Jesus Christ is a great and gracious Savior; he was never known to reject one perishing sinner who came to him for life. Let this be an encouragement to you to apply to him, and you will find him able and willing to save to the utmost.

From what has been said, we may learn the nature of true grace, how it opens the heart, and shows itself in love to God and man. This may afford some comfort to those who fear they are destitute of it. Ask your hearts whether they do not long for the salvation of your fellow-men? and whether you do not, with Christ, angels, and all good men, rejoice in their conversion? If so, it is a good evidence of grace. On the contrary, those selfish souls, who can be content to go to heaven alone, while they care not if all around them perish, while they make no one effort to rescue them from destruction; such persons have reason to fear; for if we love not our neighbor whom we have seen, how can we love God whom we have not seen?

Finally, let every serious hearer suffer the word of exhortation. See, in St. Paul, a pattern of holy zeal, and imitate it. Like him, let it be your heart's desire and prayer to God, that Israel may be saved. Look around you, and see, who is there to whom you may be useful. Consider by what means you may best advance the glory of the great Redeemer, by bringing souls to him. Remember that life is short, and all opportunities of usefulness will cease. Work then while it is day, for the night of death is coming, when no man can work. “Serve your generation according to the will of God,” and then enter into the promised rest; where, with all the redeemed, you shall glorify the riches of free grace to all eternity.

PRAYER.—ALMIGHTY God, we behold the transgressors and are grieved; our souls are vexed from day to day with the filthy conversation of the wicked. We see the broad road which leads to destruction thronged with multitudes, while few are walking in the narrow way

that leads to life. We lament that so many of our fellow-creatures are living in open sin; in carelessness about their souls, in formality, and in error. We tremble to think of their danger; we earnestly wish they may partake of our happiness, both here and hereafter; that their souls may be saved; that thy name may be glorified; and that our country may be benefited. For this, O Lord, we lift up our hearts to thee, that thou wouldst be pleased to snatch these poor sinners as brands out of the fire; to show them the danger of their present situation; and enable them now, whilst it is called To-day, to hear thy voice, and to cry to thee for mercy. And O! fill our hearts with gratitude, that thou hast called us, as we trust, by thy grace, out of darkness into thy marvellous light, and translated us from the kingdom of Satan into that of thy dear Son. Keep us, O Lord, unto the end; may we glorify thee upon earth, and then be admitted into thy presence, to see thy face, and sing thy praise for ever and ever! Amen.

SERMON XVIII.

THE PRODIGAL SON; OR, THE PENITENT JOYFULLY RECEIVED.

Luke xv. 24. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

JESUS CHRIST came into the world to save sinners; he therefore behaved in a kind and affable manner to all, even to some who had been very great sinners. This offended the Jews, and especially the self-righteous Pharisees. They thought that a holy prophet should have nothing to do with such bad people; not considering that he went among them on purpose to save them from their sins. But Jesus Christ vindicates his conduct, by appealing to the custom of men in general, who always rejoice when they recover any valuable thing that was lost. In this beautiful and affecting parable we have,

I. The Prodigal's sin and folly, in departing from his father, and living in a riotous manner.

II. His repentance and return.

III. His kind reception.

IV. The envy of his elder brother upon that occasion.

I. We have the prodigal's sin and folly, v. 11—13. "A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me: and he divided unto them his living. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living."

The prodigal son is an emblem of a sinner. He disliked the restraint of his pious

father. He wanted to be his own master; to live in a state of independence, and to be governed by his own corrupt judgment. The language of sinners is, "Let us break his bonds asunder, and cast away his cords from us;" they say unto God, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" Job xxi. 15. All natural men are, like the prodigal, men of the world, and want their portion in this life, regardless of a portion in heaven: and, like him, they wish to live at a distance from God, and, as much as possible, "without God in the world."

But let us stop a moment, and ask whether this is not a picture of ourselves. Has not each of us, more or less, acted the same part? Is there not in us, even in us, an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God? Is not this the reason that so many forsake the house of God, even on the Lord's day—that they dislike to hear God speak to them in his preached word—that they refuse to speak to God in their prayers—and that they despise truly religious persons, who are of the family of God? Surely all this arises from hearts "alienated from this life of God;" this is "the carnal mind," which is enmity against him.

Observe, now, how he behaves in the distant country to which he went. Probably he told his father that he would traffic with his money, and so mend his fortune; or at least, that he would travel for the improvement of his mind; but he no sooner gets this portion into his hands, and becomes his own master, than he enters upon a loose, lewd, riotous way of life, in the company of bad women and other wicked companions. Thus he *wasted* his substance, and abused the gifts of God; gave himself up to luxury and lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

See the consequence of being left to ourselves; the misery of departing from God! and O, beware of wasting his gifts! Our reason, our health, our strength, our time, our money, our influence, are all talents committed to our trust; let them be used to promote the glory of God, and the salvation of our souls, and not abused to the purpose of sin and destruction.

Mark now, my friends, how certainly misery follows sin. Ver. 14. When he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Here is a proof of the truth of that old proverb—"Wilful waste makes woful want." See how the pleasures of sense

perish in the using: for as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of a fool;" a noisy blaze, succeeded by a dismal darkness. Let this, as Solomon advises, "keep thee from the evil woman; from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman; for by means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread. She hath cast down many wounded. Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." Prov. vi. 24. and vii. 26.

What was become of the prodigal's gay friends? Would none who had feasted at his table come forward to supply his wants? No: they all deserted him. Place no dependence on sinful companions. Many adore the rising sun, who turn their backs upon it when it sets. And how just it is, that he, who acts as an enemy to God, should not be able to find a friend among men!

One should have thought that now, in his adversity, he would have turned his thoughts homeward. Surely this was a proper time for serious reflection. But he was not sufficiently humbled; rather than to go back to his father, he will submit to the most servile state. Ver. 15. "He went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine." It is no disgrace in this country to be a servant, or to feed any sort of cattle: but you are to observe that he was a Jew, and as swine's flesh was forbidden to the Jews, there could be nothing more odious and abominable to him than the care of swine. It seems, too, that this gay youth was a poor worthless creature, and notwithstanding his education, fit for no better employment. O how are the mighty fallen, and how is the fine gentleman degraded!

But far greater is the disgrace of sinful men. Created at first in the image of God; honorable and happy in communion with him; see him now fallen from his high estate, become a servant of sin, yea, a slave of the devil; a companion of beasts; yea, himself, as Bishop Hall speaks, "Half a beast and half a devil!" Whatever sinners may think of themselves, their wretched business is no other than the prodigal's; they are "making provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof," and that is no better than feeding, greedy, dirty, noisy, swine.

Disgraceful as his employment was, could he have got wholesome, though plain food, he might have made himself content. But, to fill up the measure of his misery, we find he was almost starved to death.

Having, perhaps, a bad-hearted master, and that in time of famine, he had not a morsel of bread: he must not only feed the swine, but feed with them, and eat the same food. Ver. 16. "He would fain have filled his belly with the husks which the swine did eat"—wild chestnuts, probably, or some such trash, not fit for a man to eat; but though he would have been glad of them, he could not get them, or not enough of them, to satisfy his hunger.

Here also is a picture for the sinner. Husks are food for swine, not for men; so the things of this world are not more fit to satisfy the immortal soul, than husks to feed the body. They suit not our nature, nor satisfy our desires.

"Why seek ye that which is not bread,
Nor can your hungry souls sustain?
On ashes, husks, and air, you feed;
Ye spend your little all in vain."

II. Let us now proceed to a more pleasing part of the subject. "It is a long lane, they say, which has no turning," and yet, alas! thousands go on all their days in the way to eternal ruin! But here we have an instance of a sinner, reduced to the last extremity, to whom his afflictions were sanctified, beginning to repent, and return to God. Ver. 17. "And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!"

"He came to himself"—remarkable expression! He had been *beside himself*, he had acted the part of a madman; and indeed "the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil, and madness is in their heart." Eccles. ix. 3. Do madmen mistake their own condition, and fancy themselves kings and emperors? so do poor sinners; they think themselves spiritually "rich and increased with goods, &c. and know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Madmen are often desperately mischievous, and even self-murderers. So are all sinners. What madness can be equal to the eternal destruction of the soul for the sake of a few momentary pleasures? Yes, we are all far from ourselves, when we are far from God; and we never return to ourselves, till God, in mercy, return to us. Regard not then the foolish reproach of the world, who will say, when you are truly concerned for your souls, that you are mad. No; *they* are the madmen who live in sin; *you*, who are coming to God, have come to yourselves.

The Prodigal compares his own wretched state with the condition of his father's meanest servants. "I am starving; they

are feasting. I am miserable; they are happy." Just so, a repenting sinner plainly perceives his own miserable case, and longs to partake of their happiness, who live in the house of God, and are his devoted servants. "I perish," said he; so may every man say who lives in sin, "I perish; but there are others (O that I were one of them!) who dwell in the house of the Lord; feast upon his rich grace; know that their sins are pardoned, and are full of peace and joy in believing."

What is the natural consequence of such a comparison? Why an effort, an immediate effort, to mend his condition. Hope springs up in his heart; and though there was but a may-be, a mere peradventure, of success, he makes the following wise resolution; ver. 18, 19. "I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants."

He resolves to return to his father. Now, what is conversion, but the sinner's return to God? This is what God calls us to in his word—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isa. lv. 7. But with what spirit will he return? Will he feign an excuse, and go with a lie in his mouth? Will he say, "I have been very unfortunate; I have been robbed of my property; been deceived by swindlers; or had a shipwreck at sea?" Or, will he plead his youth, and indiscretion, and say, "Though I have done wrong, I had a *good heart*?" Such, my friends, are the wretched excuses of unhumiliated sinners. But the Prodigal now perceived the plague of his own heart; he was "poor in spirit;" he would make no excuses; but own his guilt, and confess he was unworthy to be treated as a son; he would be contented and thankful to be admitted into the kitchen or the scullery. "Make me as one of thy hired servants." Thus it will be with every true penitent; he will give glory to God, by making full confession of his sin, and will sincerely admit that he is totally unworthy of the mercy and grace of God."

Observe; he says, "I have sinned *against Heaven*"—against the God of Heaven: against the high authority of God, and against the wonderful goodness of God. It is a foolish and hurtful mistake of some people, when they speak of a drunkard, or some other wicked man, to

say—"He hurts none but himself." It is true, sinners hurt themselves; but they also offend and provoke the God of Heaven; and in true repentance, the sinner, like the Prodigal, and like the Psalmist, will say, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." *Before thee*, said he; the Prodigal had sinned against his father, by throwing off his easy yoke: and let young people remember, that disobedient and undutiful behavior to their parents is a sin against God, that needs his pardoning mercy, and must be repented of. Think of this, children.

Shall we pause a moment—and ask ourselves, whether we find in *our* hearts a disposition like that of the Prodigal? We have all *sinned* with him, but which of us *repents* with him? Depend upon it, we shall not think of returning to God, till we feel the misery of departing from him. We have forsaken God, we have set up for our own guides, we have abused the gift of God, we have been the slaves of sin; and have we not found emptiness, insufficiency, dissatisfaction, misery, and danger in this condition? If not, may God open our eyes, and help us to discover it. If we are convinced of these things, let us make the Prodigal's resolution, "I will arise;" and not only make it, but execute it; for we read, ver. 19, *He arose and came to his father*. There are many good resolutions formed, which come to nothing. It has been said, that "hell is paved with good resolutions:" perhaps there is not one unhappy creature there, who did not at one time or other say, "I will arise and go to my father;" but their resolutions died away. The Prodigal, however, arose, and began his journey—a long journey—for you will remember that he went into "a far country." Ah! who can tell what painful fears and doubts assaulted his mind in the way? Hunger had brought him very low; and he might have said "How can these trembling limbs carry me so many miles? I must beg my way; perhaps I may die on the road: and, oh! if I live to reach the place, how can I bear the sight of the house? My father, my offended father; will refuse to see me; forbid me the house, and after all my labor, I may be rejected, and justly too. But, however, though I may perish if I go, I *must* perish if I stay. "I will arise and go to my father."—He goes. He continues his journey; and, at length, after many a weary step, and many a toilsome day, he catches a glimpse of the mansion; he halts; his heart beats; a thousand fears rush into his mind. Ah! what shall I do? What shall I say?

Just then, for so Providence ordered it, "when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." This is the

third thing we are to consider; his kind reception. God's eyes are upon all his creatures. "He looketh upon men," to see if there be any that regard, any that return; and the very first motions of the heart towards him are noticed. "He looketh upon men; and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; he will deliver his soul from going down into the pit, and his life shall see the light." Job. xxxiii. 28.

He had compassion. A parent can readily conceive what tender feelings would be excited by the sight of a long-lost child returning in this miserable plight; and by these feelings the God of mercy is pleased to express his perfect readiness to receive and forgive a repenting sinner.

He ran. The prodigal, perhaps, stopped short, afraid to venture on; but the father runs; forgetting his age, and the gravity of his character, he runs to meet him, impatient to embrace him.

He fell on his neck and kissed him; though ragged, though filthy, though lately come from feeding swine. Any other than a father would have lothed; but the parent loves, and manifests his love by his affectionate embraces.

What a wonderful display is this of the love of God! It is thus that God presents us with the blessings of his goodness. It is thus that repenting sinners are welcomed by the God of mercy. Hear it, O my friends, hear it for your encouragement, that our God is "ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness." Nehem. ix. 17. Hear his own words; Jer. xxxi. 18. "I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh; I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth." This is the language of Ephraim's repentance. Now hear the language of God's compassion, ver. 20. "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him: I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord." Yes, sirs, God, for Christ's sake,

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keeps mercy in store for the chief of sinners who return to him.

Now what effect had this kind behavior on the prodigal? Did it make him suppress his intended confession? Did it prevent the humiliation he resolved upon? No; it rather increased his contrition and godly sorrow. An awakened sinner is affected and melted down with the discoveries of God's free, full, and pardoning love in Christ Jesus, it appears so great, so undeserved, and so excellent.

"Law and terrors do but harden,
All the while they work alone;
But a sense of blood-bought pardon
Soon dissolves a heart of stone."

The prodigal no sooner meets his father, than he cries, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."—He was going on; he would have said more; but the father stopped him, and *said to his servants*, who with surprise had followed him, and gathered round to behold the affecting scene,—*"Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."* Ver. 22—24.

The prodigal was half naked; he is clothed, and that with a robe; the dress of a prince rather than of a servant. He had the appearance of a wretched slave; the ornaments of a free man were put upon him. He was ready to starve; the most delicate food is prepared for him. He was almost overwhelmed with grief; cheerfulness and joy now fill his heart. Thus, the lower the penitent sinks into humility, the higher will God raise him, and heap upon him the greater benefits. The reconciled sinner shall be treated as a child; he shall be clothed with the garments of salvation, with the righteousness of Christ; he shall have the seal of adoption, and the graces of the Spirit enabling him to walk in the ways of God.

We have scarcely time to notice, in this fourth place, the behavior of his ill-natured elder brother; suffice it to say, it was a picture of the Pharisees; and represents the character of many "who value themselves on the regularity of their own conduct, and betray a strong aversion to the rich grace of the gospel, which is extended to the greatest sinner; they are offended that no peculiar compliment is paid to their excellence, and that others whom they despised are put on a level with them." Thus Christ reproves them.

CONCLUSION.

MEN and brethren: There are two things in this parable which I trust you will not forget—the *folly of sinners*, and the *compassion of God*. Let each one of us consider, whether he has not ungratefully run away from God—disliked his restraints—been wise in his own conceit—indulged forbidden lusts—and abused the bounties of heaven? And yet perhaps totally insensible of the evil of so base conduct. In the midst of prosperity there was not a thought of returning to God; and even in affliction trying any other method rather than that. But surely it is high time to bethink ourselves. May divine grace bring us all to ourselves, as the necessary means of bringing us to God. Let us resolve, without a moment's delay, to humble ourselves at his feet; and let us be encouraged to do so, by the affecting account we have heard of God's kindness. "He sees afar off the returning sinners; he pities, he meets, he pardons, he embraces them. He arrays them with the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness; adorns them with the ornaments of sanctifying grace; honors them with the tokens of adopting love; and invests them with all the privileges of his dear children." O that we may feel the charming force of these heavenly attractions! May there be joy in heaven and earth this day on our account! and may we, thus received into the house of God, abide there all the days of our life, admiring and adoring the sovereign, free, and everlasting grace of God: and saying, "Behold! what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God."

"The mighty God will not despise
The contrite heart for sacrifice;
The deep-fetch'd sigh, the secret groan,
Rises accepted to the throne.

"He meets with tokens of his grace,
The trembling lip, the blushing face,
His bowels yearn, when sinners pray,
And Mercy bears their sins away.

"When fill'd with grief, o'erwhelm'd with shame,
He, pitying, heals their broken frame;
He hears their sad complaints, and spies
His image in their weeping eyes.

"Thus, what a rapt'rous joy, possess'd
The tender parent's throbbing breast,
To see his spendthrift son return,
And hear him his past follies mourn?"

And now let us, who long have been
The wretched slaves of hell and sin,
Repent—made wiser by the rod—
Come to ourselves, and then to God.

PRAYER.—TEACH us, O Lord, what beseech thee, to learn from what we have now heard,

the egregious folly of sinners, and the wonderful compassion of thy heart. We see in the Prodigal an emblem of ourselves. We, like him, have wickedly departed from thee, despising thy parental care and thy merciful restraints; we have indulged many forbidden lusts, and ungratefully abused the bounties of heaven. But, blessed be thy name, if thou hast, by any means brought us to ourselves. Blessed be God for his rod, as well as for his word. Happy afflictions are those which cause us to bethink ourselves, and incline us to return to our Father! If never before, let us now say, "We will arise, and go to our Father. Father! we humble ourselves before thee; we are ashamed; we are grieved that we have offended thee, and injured ourselves. But, surely, there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared. We are encouraged by the Prodigal's reception to come to thee. O receive us; pity, pardon, and embrace us as thy children. Admit us into thy family, and to thy table. Clothe us with the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness, adorn us with the ornaments of sanctifying grace and adopting love. Never more suffer us to depart from thee; but may we dwell in thy house for ever, to adore the riches of thy sovereign grace, and to glorify thy goodness to all eternity! Amen.

SERMON XIX.

CHRIST THE WAY TO GOD AND HEAVEN.

John xiv. 6.—I am the way.

IF we believe there is a future state of happiness, called heaven, and a future state of misery, called hell, there can be nothing of greater consequence to us, than we may obtain the one, and escape the other. If we have any serious thoughts of these things, we cannot but inquire, Which is the true way to heaven? Every thing that calls itself *Religion*, pretends to be the way; but, as there are so many different ways, they cannot all be right: yea, we are bold to say they are all wrong, except one, and that one is declared in the text; "I am the way, said Jesus; no man cometh to the Father, but by me." Our Lord spake these words to his disciples when they were full of trouble, because he was about to leave them. He comforts them by saying he was going to heaven, his Father's house, to prepare a place for them, and that he would come again, and receive them to himself, that where he was they also might be; and then he adds, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." But Thomas, who was rather of a doubtful turn of mind, replied—Lord, after all thou hast said, we are still at a loss about the place where thou art going, and how then can we know the way to follow thee? Jesus answered, *I am the way*; which is as if he had said, *I am the*

Mediator between God and man ; I am the means of intercourse between heaven and earth ; whatever comes from God to a sinner, comes through me ; and whatever, of an acceptable kind, goes from a sinful man to God, must pass through my hands. In treating upon these very important and useful words, we shall show—

I. *To what Christ is a way ; and*

II. *What sort of a way he is.*

I. We are to consider, *What Christ is a way to.* Every way or road leads from some place to another ; now, as he is pleased to call himself *a way*, in condescension to our mean capacities, we are to consider what he is the way *from*, and what he is the way *to*. We are to remember that we are fallen, guilty creatures, in a state of sin, and liable to all miseries here and hereafter ; and that we are far from God, from righteousness, and from heaven : now, if ever we are brought back to God and a state of grace here, and to a state of glory hereafter, it must be in and through Jesus Christ alone. We say, then, that Christ is *the way to God, and the way to heaven.*

The first of these is directly expressed by our blessed Lord in the text : *I am the way, no man cometh to the Father but by me.* When man was first created, he lived in a happy state of nearness to God ; he knew God, and delighted in him as his chief good ; but sin, cursed sin, soon made a dreadful separation ; and now we come into the world “estranged from God, and go astray from the womb ;” we desire absence from God ; “he is not in all our thoughts ;” but we seek happiness in sin and folly. Yet is the Lord our God pleased to invite us back to him, by the promises and blessings of his Gospel, and by the ordinances of his house. And although multitudes despise these, and madly resolve to pursue the way of destruction, yet a happy few there are, who hear the voice of the Son of God in his word, are made sensible, that, being far from him, they must perish, and that it is good for them to draw nigh to him. But these persons have oftentimes such an awful view of the glorious and dreadful majesty of God, as an infinitely holy and just being, and of the distance that sin has occasioned, that they know not how to approach him. The prophet Micah thus expresses the anxious desires of such an one, chap. vi. 6. “Where-with shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God ? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old ? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil ? Shall I give my

first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul ?” Blessed be the Lord, “he hath showed us what is good !” He hath given us a full answer to these inquiries in our text. Jesus is the way. It is not by costly offerings of blood or oil, nor at the dreadful expense of sacrificing a darling child ; but Jesus is the way. He not only came to *show* us the way, but *to be* the way. He did not come to tell us how we may “make our peace with God,” as some express themselves, but to be our peace ; for “he made peace through the blood of his cross.” It is by the death of Jesus that we draw near to God ; so St. Peter tells us, “He suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might *bring us to God.*” We were far from him ; we had neither the will nor the power to return ; and sin, if not atoned for, must have made an everlasting separation between a holy God and vile sinners ; but Jesus, who was perfectly just and righteous, endured the most shameful and painful sufferings upon the cross for us, that is, in our room and stead, that he might reconcile us to God, and bring us to a holy conformity to him, and happy communion with him here, and to the eternal enjoyment of him hereafter.

In this way, that is, in Jesus, we have free access to the glorious Majesty of heaven ; we may, by prayer in his name, “come with boldness to the throne of grace,” there to “obtain mercy, and find grace to help us.” Hear what St. Paul says of this matter, Heb. x. 19, &c. “Having, therefore, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the vail, that is to say, his flesh, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.” What a glorious privilege is this ! We may approach the great God, as our reconciled God and Father ; we may use holy freedom with him in our prayers ; we have this liberty of access by the merit of Christ’s blood, and by the application of it to our consciences through faith therein. This is the *way* prepared for our use, even Jesus, who is “the way, the truth, and the life ;” he is the truth and substance of all the ordinances of the Old Testament ; with particular reference to the rending of that vail which separated the holy of holies in the temple from the holy place ; and which rending took place at the moment of our Savior’s death ; which signified that now the way to God and heaven is laid open for all believers ; and that is the second thing proposed.

2. *Jesus Christ is the way to heaven.*

This indeed follows the other; for if we come to God by Jesus as our reconciled Father, if sin be pardoned, and we are admitted to a life of holy communion with him here, it is certain that we shall also have "an abundant entrance into his heavenly kingdom and glory." Jesus died, to "redeem us to God," to his favor and image here, and to his glory hereafter. He died, to "bring many sons to glory;" that they may be satisfied with the goodness of his house, even to his holy temple; that they may be pillars in that temple, never more to go out; that they may approach him in a more sublime way of worship than at present, without the help of means and ordinances; that they may "see him face to face," without a cloud to hide his glory from them, and without the clog of sinful flesh and blood. Now Jesus is the only way to heaven. This is the record of the Gospel—"God has given to us eternal life, and *this life is in his Son.*" There it is, and nowhere else: and whoever thinks to get to heaven another way, misses the true road, and will be eternally disappointed. There are many ways to hell, but only one to heaven; and if *Jesus* be not our way, we shall never get thither. As sinners, we have forfeited heaven and deserved hell; but Jesus Christ has not only redeemed his people from the curse, that they may not go to hell, but by his perfect obedience or righteousness he has procured for them *a title to heaven.* The righteousness of Christ is "to, and upon, all who believe in him;" it is transferred to them, imputed to them, or reckoned to their account, as if they had themselves performed it; and on this ground it is that they are admitted into the realms of light and glory; "*therefore* are they before the throne, because they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb;" and not on account of any goodness, virtue, or good works of their own.

Besides this, there is *a fitness for heaven*, a meetness of disposition and capacity of enjoyment, for that holy state, without which no man can see the Lord: for it is plain that a wicked man, a carnal man, could not enjoy heaven, were he admitted into it; there must therefore be a change of heart, a love of God and holiness, as well as a title to glory. This also we have from Jesus Christ. We are not pardoned by his blood, and then sanctified by our own endeavors (these also are to be used,) but "Christ is made unto us sanctification." It is by the Spirit of Christ, dwelling and working in us, that we are renew-

ed in the spirit of our minds; the love and power of sin mortified; the world, with all its vanities, crucified to us; and we led into a spiritual life of communion with God here, as the preparation and pledge of our eternal happiness in heaven. Thus is Jesus, in every point of view, the way to heaven.

Having briefly shown that Christ is the way to God and heaven, let us stop a moment, and ask ourselves whether we have any desire that he may be *our* way in these respects? Are there not some who are so far from wishing to draw nigh to God, that their hearts and lives plainly say, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways?" You dare not say so in words; but your actions say so. God and sin cannot reign in the same heart; and when you choose sin, and indulge it, you do in effect say—"God, begone! I hate your company, I love your enemy, I love sin, and will submit to the devil's rule. I will have nothing to do with you. I hate prayer. I hate the Bible. I hate the saints." This is horrid language, and you dislike the sound of the words; but is not this the fair language of your profane cursing and swearing, of your lust and lewdness, fornication and uncleanness? Is not this the language of your sabbath-breaking, and contempt of religious ordinances and means of grace? When you get drunk, and swear, and lie, or steal, or commit any bad action, do you not say, Depart from me, and let sin and Satan have me? O my friends, consider what will be the end of these things. You must die, and then appear before God; a holy, just, and offended God; and should you not inquire, How may I come before him acceptably? Remember then that Jesus is the way, and O that you may be made "*willing*" in the day of his power," to come to him for pardon and life; for "he is able to save to the uttermost, all who come to God by him."

The same may be said of Christ as the way to heaven. Oh! how many care nothing about heaven! "And can it be supposed that any man will ever come to heaven, who never thought of it before he came thither? No, indeed, it is "the prize set before us," and the Christian must "so run as to obtain it," and there is no way to run in, but in Jesus Christ. Most men hope to go to heaven when they die; and yet few consider whether they are in the right way. As Christ only is the way, let any person inquire, when any thing is proposed to him as the way, *Is it Christ?* If men say, Good works are the way, ask, Are good works Christ? If they say, Dep-

tism and the Lord's supper are the way, ask again, Are these Christ? Is repentance Christ? Are alms Christ? This is a very easy method of coming to the truth. Christ is the way; and therefore, whatever is not Christ is not the way. *He then, only, being the way, let us,*

II. *Show what sort of a way Christ is.*

I. Christ is a *new* way; so he is called, Heb. x. 22. Not that the way of salvation by Christ is a new invention, for he is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." Adam, Abel, and Abraham, went to heaven in this way; but it is called *new*, because there was one before it. The first way, in which it was proposed for man to be happy, was by his own innocence and perfect obedience: and if Adam had not sinned, this would have been his way to heaven; but as soon as he sinned, and fell, and we in him, this way was shut up for ever: so that there never was a soul got to heaven in the way of works, nor ever will. This way, by grace, came after the other, and instead of it, and is therefore called a new way.

It is called new, because it was *newly made*, when the New Testament was written. Jesus Christ had lately died to become this way. It is new, because newly and more plainly revealed in Gospel times than it was before; and because it will always be new, and never give place to any other.

2. It is a *living* way. This way to heaven was by Christ's *dying*; yet it is called a living way, because all our life springs from his death. Christ is the life of all who live spiritually or eternally. This way is trodden only by such. All who are in this way are alive to God, and, what is more, they shall never die. The eternal life of all who are in Christ, and walk in him, is secure; for because he lives, they shall live also. No man ever died upon this road. "I am," saith Christ, "the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."—The body indeed must die, because of sin, though that is more properly called *sleep*, in the New Testament, and the body shall be raised in glory; "but the spirit is life, because of righteousness," and shall never perish, but have everlasting life.

3. It is a *plain* way. Some ways are hard to find; have many turnings and windings and cross-paths; but this way is easy to find, and to keep. The prophet Isaiah, speaking of it, says, "the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err

therein." Isa. xxxv. 8. It is an infinite mercy, that the things which belong to our peace are not difficult. There are, it is true, deep and difficult things in the Bible; but the grand truths which concern our salvation are perfectly plain and easy. What can be plainer than what is said about our fallen, sinful, helpless state, as sinners? or about Jesus Christ, as the only all-sufficient Savior? or about our duty, and saved sinners, towards God as man? It is a great blessing to poor people, that these things are so plain, and that God by his Spirit makes them so, even to "babes and sucklings;" for "the entrance of his words giveth light: it giveth understanding to the simple."

4. It is a *free* way. There are *private* ways that belong to great men, and they are open to few; it would be a trespass for a stranger to be found in them; but this is a *public* way, the king's *high-way*. St. Paul says, *it is consecrated*, that is, appointed, dedicated, devoted to this purpose, and free for the use of all who desire to travel in it. There are no bars or toll-gates, where travellers must pay for permission to enter or proceed; for salvation is "without money and without price." Isa. lv. 1. It is a way prepared on purpose for the use of *sinners*, who are returning to God; and no objections are made to such persons. No worthiness, nor qualifications, nor conditions, are required of the traveller; whosoever will, may come and welcome. It is a free way.

5. It is a *safe* and *sure* way. It is a firm solid road, there is no danger of sinking in it, for Christ is the rock of ages. It suffers no alterations by rains and floods, as other ways do; it is passable at all times; there is nothing at any time to hinder our access to God, and progress to heaven. Nor is there any occasion to fear enemies upon it. There are such; but they cannot prevail. "The devil (says one) has been busy upon this road for about five thousand years, but yet never slew one believer; for every traveller is "kept by the power of God, through faith, to salvation." So that he may walk on with boldness, and fear no evil; rejoicing to think that every believer, that once set his foot in this way, has been enabled to proceed, and not one of them failed of "receiving the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul."

6. It is a *pleasant* way. The Scripture says, "the ways of wisdom are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Satan invites men to travel in the ways of sin, under the notion of their being pleasant

and there certainly are pleasures in sin; but they are for a short season; they are now mingled with bitter pains and pangs of conscience, and they will issue in misery everlasting. But "the ransomed of the Lord," who return to the heavenly Zion, "shall come with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads." Believers are called upon to "rejoice always in the Lord." Those who travel in this way are not only secure from harm, as you have heard, but the Lord has engaged for their supply on the road; he has promised that "they shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of his house, and drink of the rivers of his pleasure." They shall "sit under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit be sweet to their taste." They shall enjoy the company of the saints as their fellow-travellers, with whom their communion shall be sweet. Yea, the Lord of the way himself has promised to bear them company, and has said "Fear not, for I am with thee;" and "I will never leave nor forsake thee."

Lastly, It is the only way. Many ways to God and heaven have been proposed by mistaken men, under the influence of the great deceiver, the devil: and it is too commonly supposed that *any way* will do, if a man is but sincere in it. But this cannot be true; for if any way of man's invention might suffice, what occasion was there for Christ to come from heaven, obey the law, and endure the curse, that he might become our way? for, "if righteousness come by the law," or men can be their own Saviors, or partake of the mercy of God without an atonement, all the vast expense of Christ's sufferings and death might have been spared; yea, in that case "the grace of God is set aside, and Christ is dead in vain." Gal. ii. 21. But Christ crucified is the only way; so St. Peter solemnly declares, Acts. iv. 12. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." There is salvation in his name; it was procured by him, and he ever lives to bestow it; it is also published by divine authority; it is given forth in the preached gospel; but there is no other, *under heaven*, given for that purpose; none given by God's orders; if any others are given, it is by impostors and deceivers. Jesus only is the way to God and heaven. Thus you see that Christ is a *new way*—a *living way*—a *free way*—a *safe way*—a *pleasant way*, and the *only way*.

APPLICATION.

My dear friends, suffer me to remind

you, that as certainly there is a way to heaven, and Christ is that way, so certainly there is a way to hell, and *sin* is that way; and so surely as the believer in Christ shall arrive at heaven, so surely shall the sinner going on in his wicked way, go to hell at last. O, Sirs, do not despise this! Do not laugh at it! It becomes you to be serious in serious matters. "Now, therefore, thus saith the Lord, *consider your ways.*" The Scripture speaks of a *false way*, a *crooked way*, a *perverse way*, a *wicked way*. Now what is *your way*? Is it the way of the flesh, the way of the world? Then, give me leave to tell you, "it leadeth to destruction." The Lord's eye is upon you. He knows the way you take; "and the way of the wicked is an abomination to him." Now, it is possible you may be deceived concerning the way you are in; you may think it safe, while you are in the utmost danger; for *the way of the wicked seduceth them*, Prov. xii. 26; and the Scriptures declare, that *there is a way which seemeth right to man; but the end thereof are the ways of death*. Prov. xiv. 12. Is it not then your wisdom, to examine very carefully whether you are in the right way or not? and as the heart is very deceitful, let me recommend it to you to pray for the Lord's help, lest, after all, you should be deceived. Let me advise you to use that prayer which you will find in the 139th Psalm, the 23d verse—*Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*

Listen to the voice of heaven, which invites you in these words—*Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon*, Isa. iv. 7. Let it be your prayer, that God would teach you *his way* and convert you from the error of *your own ways*: and for this purpose, read and hear the word of God. Say to your companions, in the words of the Prophet—*Come ye, and let us go to the house of God, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths*. Isa. ii. 3. O that God may direct your feet into the ways of peace!

Is Christ the way to God? then, believers, make daily use of him as such. Come boldly to a throne of grace. This is a way consecrated for you, and free for your use. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Remember, he is a living way. Live upon him, and live to him. Let others

see you are in Christ, by your walking not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. Remember, he is a sure way; you may walk with confidence in it, without fear of miscarrying: "He is faithful who has promised." Christ hath promised to keep his sheep, and that none shall pluck them out of his hand. The world may oppose, and Satan oppose, but greater is "He that is in you, than he that is in the world," and "if God be for us, who can be against us?"

Is Christ the way to heaven? and are any of you in him? look forward with joyful hope of the glory of God. Bless him for bringing you out of the paths of destruction, and leading you into the way of peace. Love Jesus, for becoming your way at such an expense to himself; and be concerned to walk even as he walked. Thus shall you recommend this way to others, and constrain them to say, We will go with you, for God is with you of a truth.

"Jesus, my all, to heaven is gone,
He whom I fix my hopes upon:
His track I see, and I'll pursue
The narrow way till him I view.

"The way the holy prophets went,
The road that leads from banishment;
The king's high-way of holiness
I'll go, for all his paths are peace.

"Thus will I tell to sinners round,
What a dear Savior I have found;
I'll point to thy redeeming blood,
And say, Behold the way to God!"

PRAYER.—GLORY be to thee, O God, that life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel; and although, as sinners, we have deserved thy dreadful wrath in a future state, yet, that there is a world of light, and glory, and happiness provided for the redeemed; and that thou hast, in infinite mercy, revealed to us the path of life. We rejoice to learn that there is a way to the Father and to Heaven, and that Jesus Christ himself is the way. Holy Father, we humbly approach thee in his name. In the new and living way, consecrated for us by his precious blood, we come to thee; and we desire to do this with confidence and boldness, in the full and assured belief of the truth, and with cheerful hope of a gracious acceptance, believing that this is the true way, the living way, the sure way: and in this way we desire to walk all the days of our life. And while we are in this world, we desire to walk so as to please God, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit; not according to the way of the world, but in the highway of holiness, adorning the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. And we desire to look forward with joyful hope of future and everlasting glory; that after a life of communion with God here, we may be brought to Heaven, there to be satisfied with the goodness of his house, even of his holy temple, and to serve him in a superior manner for ever and ever! Amen.

SERMON XX.

COMING SINNERS WELCOME TO CHRIST.

John vi. 37.—He that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.

Two things are necessary to encourage a convinced sinner to come to Christ for salvation: the one is, that he is *able* to save; the other is, that he is *willing*. Of the former, few comparatively doubt. And who can doubt at all, if he believes that Christ is the great Creator of the world? For "is any thing too hard for the Lord?" Nor is there the least reason to doubt of his good-will to save. And yet how many are distressed with fear on this account? There are few who say—"If thou *canst* do any thing, help us!" but there are many who cry—"Lord, if thou *wilt*, thou canst make me clean!" Happy the soul that comes thus far. Jesus will answer, as he did of old,—"*I will*, Be thou clean." This assurance he gives us in many parts of the Scripture, but in none so fully as in the text. Our Lord is here speaking to a multitude of the Jews, who, having seen the miracle of feeding five thousand people with five loaves, followed him a great way, in hope of seeing such another miracle, and perhaps of living upon his bounty. But he exhorts them to seek the bread of life for their souls; laments their unbelief; but comforts himself in this, that all who were given to him by the Father should certainly come to him; and declares his perfect readiness to receive every coming soul. This, my friends, is indeed good news; glad tidings of great joy to those of you who are seeking salvation, and who know that it is to be had only in Jesus; especially if your fearful hearts have been tempted to think he will not receive you. Be no longer faithless, but believing; he says, that if you come, he will in no wise cast you out—he will on no account whatever reject or refuse you, but readily embrace you in the arms of his mercy, and give you pardon, peace, holiness, and heaven. Now, that we may clearly understand this, and get the full comfort of it, let us consider,

I. What is meant by *coming to Christ*, and,

II. The encouragement held out in our text to all comers.

I. What is meant by *coming to Christ*. None can suppose it is coming to him with our bodies. This is now impossible; for the heavens have received him out of our sight; and though his divine presence is

everywhere, his glorified body is only in heaven. And were he on earth, as he once was, coming to him with our bodies only would be of no use, as appears from this chapter, ver. 56, where he says to the people who were round about him—"Ye also have seen me, and believed not." Nor is it merely coming to his house, where he is preached; nor to his table, where he is set forth. Many do all this, who are none the nearer to Christ. Ezek. xxxiii. 31. But this coming is to be understood spiritually; it is the coming of the heart; it is the motion of the mind; it is "the flight of the soul to Christ." It is therefore much the same as *believing in Christ*; see ver. 35; "and Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life; he that *cometh to me* shall never hunger; and he that *believeth on me* shall never thirst;" the same person is intended, and the same act of the mind.

But you will observe, that such a comer to Christ is convinced of his sin and danger, and comes to Christ for help; just as it is said by the prophet-Isaiah (xxvii. 13.) "The great trumpet shall blow, and be blown, and *they shall come which were ready to perish.*" No man will go and beg for bread till he is pinched with want. The prodigal son never said, "I will arise, and go to my father," till he was ready to perish with hunger. It is a sense of sin and a fear of hell, together with a hope of mercy, that puts a man upon coming to Christ; for he himself declares, when speaking to the Jews, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." *Life*, you see, is what a sinner must come for; the life of his soul, for he now sees that he is exposed by sin to eternal death. Now, "all that a man hath, will he give for his life." When this is in danger, he will be in earnest; he will be in haste; and the language of the coming sinner is—"What shall I do to be safe?"—"Lord, save, or I perish!"

This coming of his soul to Christ supposes faith. No man can come to him till he has heard of him; and no man can hear of him but by the Gospel. Now the Gospel means good news; glad tidings. The Gospel tells us that "Jesus Christ is come into the world to save sinners;" that "he is come to seek and to save that which is lost;" that "his blood cleanseth from all sin." The Gospel also calls and invites poor sinners to apply to Jesus, that they may have life. For instance, Jesus says, Matt. xi. 28. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Now the sinner hears these gracious words. The Holy Spirit gives

him light to understand them. He mixes faith with them. He believes them to be true. Now he cannot believe these things without being affected with them; without having a desire to be interested in them. If he is persuaded of the freeness, fullness, and suitableness of the salvation that is in Christ, his thoughts must and will be much engaged about it; his affections will be moved; in other words, he comes to Christ, his mind flies to him for refuge, and there it rests.

Now this application of the soul to Jesus has a respect to the various offices and characters which he sustains for our salvation. For instance. Is he called a *Savior*, that is, a deliverer? the soul desires and hopes for deliverance from sin and hell by him alone. Is he a *Prophet*? the soul, sensible of its woful ignorance, comes to him, with an humble teachable spirit, to be taught and made wise to salvation. Is he a *Physician*? the convinced sinner, sick to death of sin, eagerly applies to him for health and cure. Is he a *Priest*? the sinner, longing for pardoning mercy, depends alone upon the merit of his sacrifice. Is he a *King*? the soul, heartily weary of Satan's tyranny, willingly submits to his mild government, and relies on his heavenly protection. In a word, he "receives Christ Jesus the Lord," as offered to him in the Gospel.

Here let us stop a moment, and put a question. We have been told what believing is; what coming to Christ is; now, my friends, the question is, *Do we thus come to Christ?* He that cometh shall be saved; but he that cometh not, shall not be saved. O let us not neglect this great concern! "How shall we escape, if we neglect this great salvation?" Think of a dying hour. Think of the judgment day.

And O! how dreadful would it be, if Christ should say to any one of us—"Wretched creature, ruined sinner, your destruction lies at your own door! You were told of your danger; you were invited to believe in me; you were assured, that if you came to me, I would save you; but you refused; you would not come to me, that you might have life. Perish therefore. Perish without pity. Perish without remedy!" God forbid that we should hear such dreadful words! rather let us, one and all, this very moment, fly, in the wishes and desires of our hearts, to this compassionate Friend of sinners.

But perhaps there are some here who earnestly desire to be saved, yet their hearts are full of fear, lest they should be rejected. They have such a sight of the

greatness of their sins—of their ignorance—of their unworthiness—of the wickedness of their hearts, that they are afraid to come, lest the Lord should cast them out.

This is a very common case. You must think that scarcely any one feels and fears as you do. Were you to talk with serious persons in general, you would find that almost all of them, especially at first, have had the very same fears, and have been so much distressed at times, that they were almost in despair. Jesus Christ knew beforehand that it would be thus; and he therefore graciously spoke these kind encouraging words, on purpose to comfort poor, doubting, trembling, coming sinners—"Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." That we may take the comfort of these precious words, let us,

II. Consider the encouragement held out in the text to *all comers*; I say to *all comers*—"him that cometh;" let him be who he may: high or low: rich or poor: young or old: learned or ignorant: yea, even great sinners; the chief of sinners; all who come shall be welcome. Great sinners need great encouragement; and here they have it. What words could have been spoken more comfortable to the distressed sinner? Many are afraid that there is something *peculiar* in their case; something, on account of which they shall certainly be cast out: but our gracious Lord, who well knew what timid creatures his people are, has provided in these words an effectual antidote to their fears. This word, *Him*, takes in all sorts of persons, in all ages and places: all sorts of sinners, even the greatest: it includes liars, drunkards, harlots, thieves, murderers, and all other kinds and degrees of sinners whomsoever. If any doubt of the truth of this, let them turn to the following texts: Isa. i. 18. Matt. xii. 31. Matt. xxi. 31. Mark xvi. 15, 16. Acts xiii. 39. Only let them come, they shall be received; no difficulties made; no objections started: whatever they have been, whatever they have done, they shall not be cast out. Nay, more, Jesus says—"I will in no wise cast him out." I will not by any means, or on any account whatsoever, let it be what it may, cast him out: though he may deserve it: though he may dread it; let him take my word for it. I will receive and embrace him; I will show him all the mercy he needs, for pardon, peace, and holiness: I will save him for ever. Such is the import of these most glorious words. And this might be enough, were it not that sinners, who are coming to Christ, are com-

monly fruitful in fears and objections, and can scarcely be persuaded of this truth: it seems too great and too good to be true, at least as applied to them, who see their unworthiness and feel their guilt. For the greater satisfaction, then, of such trembling souls, let us attend to a few considerations, from which it will appear, that Jesus Christ will heartily welcome every coming sinner.

I. Consider the gracious nature, the kind disposition of Christ towards sinners. "God is love." Jesus is love incarnate. He is the God of love in human nature. "His heart is made of tenderness, his bowels melt with love." We are to remember that he is the brother of our nature. Because we are flesh and blood, he became such, that he might be a merciful high-priest, and, through death, abolish death. Heb. ii. 14, 17. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." Had he not loved sinners, he had never forsaken the throne of heavenly glory; condescended to be born of a poor virgin; to be laid in a manger; to be always a man of sorrows, labors, and sufferings; to endure the contradiction of sinners against himself; and, after all, to be betrayed, falsely accused, scourged, smitten, spit upon, crowned with thorns, and nailed to a cross. Who, that considers this, can doubt whether Jesus loves sinners?

The names of Christ, both in the Old and New Testament, point out his gracious nature. Simeon waited for *the consolation of Israel*. Now, if Jesus had not a gracious heart, his appearance in the world would have been no consolation to sinful men. The prophet Isaiah says, "He shall feed his flock like a *Shepherd*: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." Jesus is this good and gracious shepherd, who even laid down his life for the sheep; who feeds them in his pleasant pastures, and guards them with his almighty hand. He is the tender and skilful *Physician*, who heals the sick, disordered, and dying souls: who never refuses a patient, nor fails in the most desperate case. He is the *Good Samaritan*, who pities and helps the wounded and dying traveller, neglected and forsaken of men. He is the *Husband* of his church, a name that implies tender care and a kind affection; and whose love is the pattern for mortals to imitate. In short, he is, as his enemies reproachfully said, *the Friend of sinners*; not of *sin*, as they pretended,

but that best of friends, who "delivers us from our sins."

2. Consider *the Office of Christ*, as another argument to prove his readiness to receive a coming sinner. Jesus Christ, as touching his godhead, is equal with the Father; but he condescended to become a servant for our salvation. As such he often speaks of being "sent;" and of doing "not his own will, but the will of his Father." And what is the will of the Father, think you? "*This*," saith Jesus, "*is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing: but that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.*" John vi. 39, 40. Jesus Christ is "*the Apostle and High-Priest* of our profession." The high-priest was an officer of the Jewish church, whose business it was to offer gifts and sacrifices; it was necessary for him to be tender-hearted to the ignorant, and those who were out of the way, and to be faithful to God and man. Thus Jesus, our great High-Priest, is compassionate; "is touched with the feelings of our infirmities; was tempted in all points like as we are; and being made perfect through sufferings became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Heb. iv. 15. v. 9. Now it is the office and business of Jesus Christ to save sinners. The high-priest of old had nothing to do but with sinners. It was an office on purpose for sinners; and this was the only errand of Christ to our world. He came "not to condemn the world: he declined any thing of that sort; as you may remember respecting the woman taken in adultery, he would not condemn her." John viii. He abhorred her sin, but it was not his office to condemn; he came only to save. And as to proud, self-righteous people, he had nothing to do with them; for "he came not to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Look then upon Jesus, as a public officer, appointed by divine authority to dispense mercy and pardon to every coming sinner; to every one who comes to God for mercy through him. As it is the duty of a judge to dispense the laws, and do justice between man and man; or as it is the duty of the physician of an hospital to take care of all the sick who are in it; so it is the gracious office of the Lord Jesus to dispense mercy, pardon, grace, life, and salvation, to all who apply to him; and were it possible, we speak it with the deepest reverence, were it possible, which it is not, that the blessed Jesus should refuse and reject one sinner who

comes to him for life, he would be unfaithful; but this can never be; we have his word for it in the text, "I will in no wise cast out him that cometh."

3. Consider, once more, the gracious conduct and behavior of our Savior when he was upon earth. "He went about doing good." And who were the objects of his regard? Were they the princes and rulers, the rich and prosperous, the wise and learned? No. These, in general, despised and rejected him. He turned his attention to the poor and needy, the sick and miserable; yea, to publicans and harlots, that he might reclaim and save them. This was his reproach—"a friend of sinners." Did he see a multitude of ignorant people following him for instruction? How did he exert himself in teaching them; in houses, in synagogues, in the temple, in a ship, on a mountain! How plainly, how sweetly, how forcibly did he lead them into divine knowledge! Nor did he forget their bodies. Were they hungry, and ready to faint? he had compassion on them, and worked miracles to supply them with food. See also what vast numbers of diseased persons apply to him; the blind; the deaf; the dumb; the diseased with fever, leprosy, palsy; and others possessed with the devil; he heals them all. You never read of one poor, sick, miserable creature that he rejected; if they came, they were welcome: he never sent them away disappointed, and do you think he will show less pity to the sorrows of the mind, to the diseases of the soul? Surely not; for the salvation of one soul is of more consequence than all the thousands of bodily cures he wrought upon earth. Every man and woman that Christ healed, died at last; but he whom Jesus saved "shall never die, but have everlasting life." And yet this, great as it is, is as easy to him as to say to a leper, Be thou clean. Come but to him, fellow-sinner, and he will directly say, Be thou saved.

Remember, too, what a kind attention Jesus paid to mourning sinners. Remember the penitent harlot in the Pharisee's house: she came behind him, and washed his feet with penitential tears: she was despised by the Pharisee, because she had been a great sinner; but Christ speaks kindly to her, and says, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." Remember what he said to another great sinner, the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar—"If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that speaketh to thee, thou wouldest have asked, and he would have given thee living water." John iv. 10.—If you knew the

worth of salvation, and would ask it of Christ, you should have it; and he says the very same to us: "If you knew the value of my salvation, felt your need of it, and would apply to me for it, you should not be denied." Remember, my friends, how Jesus mourned and wept, when hardened sinners were about to perish in their unbelief; remember how he wept to think of Jerusalem's approaching destruction. Remember, too, how he rejoiced at the prospect of a sinner's salvation? though he was a man of sorrows, this filled him with joy; and can you doubt, after all this, whether Jesus will receive you or not: O be not faithless, but believing. Stagger not at this precious promise through unbelief; but be strong in faith, glorifying God.

APPLICATION.

FROM what has been said, we may learn what an important thing it is to come to Christ. We are all, by nature, at a dreadful distance; and "they that are far from him," if they die so, "must perish." This then is the first and chief thing in religion, to come to Christ; that is, so to believe the Gospel, as to apply in heart and mind to him for salvation. It is not enough to come to church, or come to meeting, or come to sacrament; all is in vain, if we do not come to Christ: for salvation is to be had of none but Christ, and not of him neither, without coming for it.

Come then, you who never came before. You shall have heaven if you come; hell must be your portion if you do not come. Pray to God to draw you. "Draw me," says the church, "we will run after thee." Come quickly. You may be less disposed to come to-morrow; yea, to-morrow itself may never come to you. Consider the encouragement that these words of Christ afford. "Come to me," said Jesus, "for I am meek and lowly of heart." You need not be afraid to come, for he says, and you may believe him, "he will in no wise cast you out." Make no excuses. Say not I am ignorant. Come to him, and he will teach you. Say not I have a hard heart. Come to him, and he will soften it. Say not I have a corrupt heart. Come to him, and he will sanctify it. Say not, I am a great sinner—this is the very reason why you should come. "This man receiveth sinners;" he came on purpose to save them, and bids you come, that he may save you. Think not foolishly, first to mend yourselves, and then come to him; you will never be better till you do come.

"Come needy, come guilty, come lothesome and bare;

You can't come too filthy; come just as you are."

And you who have come—adore the grace that inclined you to come; that made you willing in the day of God's gracious power, and that made you welcome in the day of his wonderful mercy.

"'Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forc'd us in;
Else we had still refus'd to taste,
And perish'd in our sin."

What hath God wrought? Is it not good to draw near to God? Have you not tasted that the Lord is gracious? "God hath strewed all the way from the gate of hell where thou wast, to the gate of heaven, whither thou art going, with flowers out of his own garden. Behold, how the promises, invitations, calls, and encouragements of the Gospel lie round about thee." O keep near to thy Savior; there is safety, there is peace.

This last affords to every believer a sure mark of his election. Do you sometimes fear whether your name is written in heaven; whether you are among his elect? Behold the certain proof. "All that the Father hath given to me *shall come to me.*" Have you come to Christ? Well, then, this is the proof of your being one of those who were given to him. Thus make "your calling and election sure;" your election, by your calling.

Finally, let those who have come to Christ, by faith, rejoice to think, that in the heavenly world they shall come to him in a superior manner. "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face: Faith shall be changed into sight, and hope into possession." "So shall we be for ever with the Lord."

"Come weary souls with sin distress'd,
Come, and accept the promis'd rest;
The Savior's precious calls obey,
And cast your gloomy fears away."

"Oppress'd with guilt, a painful load,
O come, and spread your woes abroad;
Divine compassion, mighty love,
Will all the painful load remove."

Lord, we accept, with thankful heart,
The hope thy gracious words impart:
We come with trembling, yet rejoice,
And bless the kind inviting voice."

Dear Savior! let thy pow'rful love
Confirm our faith; our fears remove,
And sweetly influence ev'ry breast,
And guide us to eternal rest."

PRAYER.—O God of all grace, we are greatly encouraged by that most gracious promise which we have now been considering. Blessed Jesus, thou art the only, the all-sufficient Savior. 'Thou art able to save to the uttermost all who come to the Father by thee; and we have now been assured that thou art as *willing to save* as thou art able,—that thou wilt not reject any sinner who comes to thee for salvation. Blessed Lord, thy

name and thy nature is Love; thy love brought thee down from Heaven, laid thee in the manger, and nailed thee to the cross. Thou didst go about doing good, and didst never refuse to help the sick and the miserable, when they came to thee for relief; and we believe thou art the same gracious Lord, now thou art in Heaven: that thou art rich in grace and mercy to all who call upon thee. Thou art still saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Adorable Savior, we come at thy call. We are ignorant; we come unto thee, to teach us. We are guilty; we come unto thee, as the great Atonement for sin. We are weak and exposed; we come to thee, to strengthen and defend us: O do thou be all in all unto us, for body and for soul; for time and for eternity; and we will ascribe blessing and honor, glory and power unto thee for ever and ever! Amen.

SERMON XXI.

THE VAIN EXCUSES OF SINNERS EXPOSED.

Luke xiv. 18.—And they all, with one consent, began to make excuse.

THE blessings of the Gospel in Christ are, in the parable of which the text is a part, fitly compared to the dainties of a noble and costly feast. "A certain man made a great supper, and bade many," ver. 16. So Christ has made plentiful provisions in his Gospel for the souls of men, and freely invites all who hear it to be partakers. "And he sent his servants at supper-time, to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready," ver. 17. So Christ having called the *Jews* by his own ministry, sent the apostles after his resurrection to renew the invitation, and to say that the work of redemption was finished, and that he was willing to receive all who should come by faith to him; and this is the language of the Gospel wherever it is preached.

If we consider the nature of a feast, we shall see how properly our Savior compares the blessings of our salvation to it. In a feast we expect *wholesome provision—plenty—variety—elegance—company, and the whole gratis*. All these, and more, Jesus gives us in his Gospel. Here is "*the bread of life* which came down from heaven," without which we must for ever perish; but eating which secures our eternal life. Here is *plenty*, for in our Father's house there is bread enough and to spare; and however many the guests who come, still "there is room." Here is *variety*; pardon, peace, holiness, adoption, joy in the Holy Ghost, communion with God, perseverance to the end, and glory, to crown the whole. Here is *elegance*; dain-

ties worthy God to bestow; dainties fetched from heaven; dainties purchased at a cost beyond the value of a thousand worlds—for "Christ's flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed!" Here is *good company*; for, sitting down at the Gospel feast, "we come to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and church of the first-born; and to God, the Judge of all; and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus." And what is best of all, it is *gratis*—"without money, and without price"—"the poorer the wretch, the welcomer here."

Now if these great and glorious blessings are considered, how necessary, how free, how precious and delightful! one would naturally suppose that all men, to whom the Gospel offers them, would as readily and joyfully receive them, as they usually accept an invitation to a plentiful and agreeable entertainment. But, alas, it is not so! If we examine the word, or look into the world, we shall find it quite otherwise.—"They all with one consent begin to make excuses;" for all men, till changed by the grace of God, are blind, and lame, and deaf, and dead, as to all spiritual things; seduced by the Devil's lies, and in love with the world, they vainly strive "to fill their belly with the husks of swine," but have no more relish for salvation, than a sick man for wholesome food; yea, like him, "their soul lotheth dainty meat."

Yet amidst this awful depravity, to the honor of Scripture and the truths of God, men are ashamed to give a direct refusal; conscience admits the value of the Gospel: and therefore, to make their neglect of it appear justifiable, they have recourse to various excuses, with which they strive to satisfy themselves and their neighbors, and vainly hope to satisfy God. To describe these excuses, and to answer them; to show what they are, and the folly of them, is the business, which, with the Lord's assistance, I shall now attempt; and O that the Spirit of our God may succeed what shall be said to the conviction of these excusers, and sweeping away all their refuges of lies.

We shall first notice the three excuses which follow our text; and then proceed to mention other excuses and objections which are often made.

I. *The first said—I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it; I pray thee have me excused.*

This is the plea of a *rich* man, who had been adding field to field. He was under no kind of necessity to view the land he

had bought: probably he had seen it before he had bought it; if not, he might have stayed till another day, and have found the field in the same condition; but he wanted to feast his eyes upon his new purchase. See here an instance of the inordinate love of the world, the pride of possession, the deceitfulness of riches. This was "a man of the world, whose portion was in this life," for the sake of which he was deaf to the call of Christ. O how hardly shall they who are rich enter into the kingdom of heaven! so great is the danger of loving the world too much.

2. *And another said—I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused.* Here is the man of *business*: the former was taken up with pleasure; this with care. "Too much leisure, or too much business, are equally dangerous to the soul." This was a frivolous excuse like the former; another day would have done as well for proving oxen in the plow, for the purchase was already made; but anxiety for the world prevailed over his spiritual interest. And what is this but the common excuse of tradesmen, laborers, and women who have families? *I have no time to spare for religion.* Let me ask you, What is your time for? Is not the care of the soul *the one thing needful*? Should you not seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness? Besides, "what will it profit, if you gain the whole world, and lose your own soul." And let me tell you, there is time enough to mind the affairs of both worlds, and both are best minded together: the one need not shut out the other. Religion will not make men idle; it will make an idle man industrious; it tends even to worldly prosperity. "Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of this life, and of that which is to come."

How can any man say he has no time for religion, when the Sabbath-day is appointed for that very purpose; yet that holy day is profaned by many, by business, idleness, or taking pleasure. There are fifty-two days in every year, which ought to be wholly employed in public or private duties of religion. What account will they give to God of their time, who have squandered away their precious hours in their sin and folly, and who have turned their backs on the means of grace, which might have made them wise to salvation.

Permit me also to observe, that some, who cannot find time to serve God, can find time to sin: they can find time to curse and swear, to talk and sing obscene-

ly, to be drunken, and to be wanton. Yea, some of these people complain of too much time; and therefore they invent amusements to *kill time*. O, if the hours that some consume at the ale-house, the fairs, and merry meetings, were spent in hearing and reading the word of God, in prayer, and singing his praises, to how much better account would they turn out!

3. The excuse of a third person was, *I have married a wife, and therefore cannot come.* Here is an excuse of another kind, which takes in too great a regard to creatures, and too much fondness for domestic enjoyments, and the pleasures of this life. It was a very weak excuse; for though he had married a wife, he might surely have left her for a few hours, without a breach of proper affection; or he might have taken her with him to such a great feast as this, where so many were bidden, and none forbidden; or he might have gone alone, if he could not persuade her to go with him. How many perish by the unlawful use of lawful things, and undue regard to carnal relations! Husbands and wives, who ought to help each other in the great concerns of salvation, are often deadly hindrances; and will reproach each other to all eternity for being such. Thus Adam ruined himself and all his posterity by carnal fondness, and loving the creature more than the Creator. Let married persons be on their guard; and remember that not only houses and lands, but wives too, must sometimes be forsaken, rather than for their sakes we should forsake Christ.

All these excuses were, as you see, frivolous and foolish; they were all of a worldly kind; and indeed it is *the world*, in some form or other, that proves the great hindrance of men's salvation. But there are many other excuses which people are apt to make, equally absurd. I shall proceed to notice some of them.

Religion, says one, is a hard and difficult thing; hard to understand, and difficult to practise. I answer, *Is it necessary?* Christ says, it is *the one thing necessary*. It is just as necessary as salvation is. And do you object to every thing necessary, because it is difficult? Do not you find hardships in your trade or business? and yet you pursue it. Consider, also, it will be much harder to bear the torments of hell, than to practise the duties of religion. A person, who wanted one of the martyrs to recant, said, "Life is sweet and death is bitter." "True (said he) but eternal life is sweeter, and eternal death is more bitter." Will not heaven make amends for all our pains and labors?

Do you think there is a saint in heaven, that repents of what he did or suffered for Christ? but in fact, true religion is not so difficult as you may imagine: the path is so plain, that "the way-faring man, though a fool, shall not err therein." And Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light; his commands are not grievous, and grace makes them pleasant. Religion is far from being a gloomy business. "Wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Can it make a man unhappy to love God, and be loved by him? It is a gloomy thing to be at peace with God, to know that our sins are pardoned, and to have the earnest of glory! There are joys in religion far beyond any that the world can pretend to, and such as wicked men would be glad to possess, when they come to lie on a dying bed: then is the value of true religion known, when the world can afford no further help.

5. Some object, and say, *Your religious people are hypocrites; after all their pretences, they are like other folks.* I answer by a question—Are they *all* hypocrites? If so, then there is no such thing as religion in the world; if so, the Bible is all a lie, and Christ must have shed his blood in vain; for he died to redeem us from the world; and our vain conversation in it, and to make us a holy people zealous of good works. It is admitted there are some hypocrites; and woe be to them! There was a hypocrite, a Judas, even among the apostles; but religion did not cease because of him. If there was not a reality and an excellency in religion, there would be no hypocrites; if guineas and bank-notes were not valuable, there would be no counterfeits; and, I presume, you do not refuse to take any money, because there is base coin; nor would you excuse yourself from paying your rent to your landlord, because you are afraid of taking bad money. If there are hypocrites, as you say, and we allow, then there is the greater need to look to yourself, that you are sincere; but I greatly doubt the sincerity of those who make this excuse; and their hearts tell them it will not be admitted at the bar of God. Besides, it is censorious and wicked to judge another man, and to call him a hypocrite, unless his life is bad; but, because you can find no blemish in the life of a truly religious person, you presume to search his heart, and call him a hypocrite. The truth is, you would be glad to prove him such, as an excuse for your own want of religion.

6. Methinks I hear another person say—

I see no occasion to make so much fuss about religion.—You say truly; *you* do not see: but your not seeing, is a proof of nothing but your own blindness; a blind man sees nothing. If you examine the word of God, you will find the Christian life compared to a warfare; now a soldier's life, in the time of actual service, is not idle. It is also compared to a race, in which great exertion and activity are necessary, if a man would so run as to obtain the prize. A Christian is represented in Scripture as "crucifying the old man of sin," and "mortifying the deeds of the flesh;" and can these things be done by the slothful man, who is a stranger to zeal himself, and hates to see it in another? Has not God required you to love him with all your heart, and all your soul, and all your mind, and all your strength; and do you know anybody that does more than this? Let me also ask you, Why it is that you commend industry in worldly business, and despise it in religion? If there be a hell to avoid, and a heaven to obtain, and a sin to destroy, and a God to serve, and a soul to save—why should you not be as earnest in religion as you are in the world? why should not a Christian love God as much as you love money, or sin? I know the answer your heart makes.

7. Another cries—*I shall do as well as my neighbor: and if I perish, God help thousands!* I reply, If you do not better than the thousands that perish, God help you! Jesus Christ has said, "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat;" while the narrow way to life is found and trod by few. Think not well of your state, because you are like others: you have greater cause to suspect it. Christ's flock is small; but the devil's herd is large. "The whole world," says St. John, "lieth in wickedness." Follow not, then, the multitude to do evil, but consider their end, and be wise. It is a very affecting and useful story that Mr. Baxter relates in his "Call to the Unconverted;" "I remember," says he, "a circumstance that a gentleman told me he saw upon Acham-bridge, over the Severn, near Shrewsbury. A man was driving a flock of fat lambs; and something meeting them, and hindering their passage, one of the lambs leaped on the walls of the bridge, and his legs slipping from under him, he fell into the stream: the rest, seeing him, did, one after one, leap over the bridge into the stream, and were all, or almost all, drowned. Those that were behind did little know what was become of them that

were gone before, but thought they might venture to follow their companions; but as soon as ever they were over the wall, and falling headlong, the case was altered. Even so it is with unconverted carnal men. One dieth by them, and drops into hell, and another follows the same way; and yet they will go after them, because they think not whither they are gone. O! but when death hath once opened their eyes, and they see what is on the other side of the wall, even in another world, then what would they give to be where they were?"

8. Another objector says—*But I hope to do better than many, for I am not so bad a sinner as some.* I answer, You are not to be compared with others, but with the law of God, which requires perfect obedience. Now, compared with this, you will be found a sinner; and it is not being a less sinner than another that will save you; but faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose righteousness is "to and upon all that believe in him." Besides, the folly of such an excuse is manifest; for if finding another man worse than one's-self would do, then all sinners might escape except that one, who is worst of all.

9. Perhaps another person will say—*It is true I am a sinner bad enough; but I do some good things, and will not they atone for my sins?* St. Paul shall answer. "Without shedding of blood there is no remission;" the good works of men were never appointed to the office of a Savior; for "if righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain." Why do we call Jesus a *Savior*, and yet hope to be saved by our works? which is to become our own Savior. But the word of God has settled this, and declares, Eph. ii. 8, "By grace are we saved, through faith; and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." And to say the truth, no man can do works good in the sight of God until he is first justified by faith, for even "the prayers of the wicked are an abomination to him;" and the thirteenth Article of the Church of England truly says, that "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God; and we doubt not but they have the nature of sin."

10. Unwilling to humble himself, and cry for mercy, another says—*I am no scholar, and God expects no more than he gives.* I answer, You may be a true Christian, and yet no scholar. God hath sent you his word, and you can *hear* it, if you cannot read it; not to say, that since Sunday schools have been set up, every person

almost may learn to read, if he will. But know this, my friends, that ignorance will excuse none. Where knowledge is a duty, ignorance is a sin. It is not your want of opportunity to know the Gospel, but your want of inclination to it, that keeps you ignorant. You take pains to know how you may get food and raiment, or charity; why then remain contentedly ignorant of "the things which belong to your everlasting peace?" Isa. xxvii. 11. 2 Thess. i. 8.

11. Another person, advanced in years, says—*I am too old to change my religion.* What do you call religion? Is it a set of notions and ceremonies? Is it an attachment to certain ministers and buildings? This is not religion. Religion is the devotedness of the heart to God; and without this the most pompous forms are of no avail. Nicodemus was an old man when he came to Christ, who said to him as we say to you, "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." In a word, if your religion has not changed you, it is high time to change your religion.

12. Methinks I hear another say,—*I intend to be better at some future time.* So did Felix, who trembled when Paul preached, and said to him, "When I have convenient season, I will call for thee;" but that season never came. Hell is paved with good intentions. Should you die in your sins, which God forbid! out of your own mouth will you be condemned; for you are forced to admit that all is not right; and yet you venture to go on in sin, though you know not what a day may bring forth.—Go to the sick and dying bed of a neighbor, and hear him groan and complain of an aching head and a sick stomach; observe his shaking hand and disordered pulse; the rattling throat, the convulsed limbs, and the cold sweat; and say, is this a time for repentance? Are these poor dregs of life all you should offer to God? O be wiser; nor leave the service of God, or the salvation of your soul, to so improper a season.

But, after all, the true reason remains untold. May not all your excuses be summed up in this one?—*I love sin, and cannot part with it;* but observe, you must part with sin, or part with heaven. You must turn or burn. And are you content to enjoy the present pleasures of sin for a moment, and endure everlasting pains, which are their certain consequence? It is related of a man, who, by his excesses, was in danger of losing his sight; and being told by the physician that he must change his course or lose his sight, replied, "Then

farewell dear light!" Thus many, by persisting in sin, seem to say,—Farewell God of mercy, Savior of sinners, Spirit of holiness! farewell ye people of God! farewell life of happiness, heaven and glory! and, for the sake of dear sin, welcome devils, welcome darkness, despair and misery, for evermore.

APPLICATION.

THUS, Sirs, we have taken notice of some of those excuses which sinners often make, who love darkness rather than light; who follow lying vanities, and forsake their own mercies. But it is plain that all these excuses arise from the darkness, worldliness, and enmity of our fallen nature, and they show the necessity of having "a new heart, and a right spirit." These excuses will scarcely now satisfy those who make them; they will miserably fail them in the prospect of death; and they cannot be accepted at the bar of God. In his parable before us, it is said, that "when the servant showed his Lord these things, *he was angry*, and said, None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." God forbid this sentence should go forth against any person here. As yet, our gracious Lord commands us to "go out into the high-ways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that his house may be filled." In his name we come, and call you to the Gospel-feast. Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade you; and knowing the bounty of the Lord, we invite you. None ever repented of coming; nor were any rejected who came. Come then to Jesus. "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come; and let him that heareth, say, Come; and let him that is athirst, Come: and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

"All things are ready, come away,
Nor weak excuses frame;
Crowd to your places at the feast,
And bless the founder's name."

PRAYER.—MERCIFUL Father! how great is thy goodness to the children of men! Our sins deserve thy wrath, and justly we might be condemned, and punished for ever. But such is thy grace, that thou hast provided for us a great salvation, which it hath pleased thee to compare to a royal feast; and thou hast sent thy servant to invite us to it, saying "Come, for all things are now ready." O make us heartily willing, and truly glad to come at thy call, and partake of that heavenly food, of those rich dainties, which will secure our eternal life. O that by faith we may feed upon Christ, "whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed."

We are ashamed to think that we, or any of our fellow-sinners, should refuse thy invitation; preferring the world, the flesh, and sin, to the Gospel. O that they may no longer make vain

and wicked excuses, lest thou shouldst be angry, and swear in thy wrath that they shall never taste of thy supper! But O make us willing in the day of thy power, thankful and glad to receive thy proffered benefits, without money and without price, that so we may be happy both here and hereafter, and glorify thy name to all eternity! and this we beg for the sake of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

SERMON XXII.

CHRIST THE BREAD OF LIFE, AND THE NATURE OF FAITH IN HIM.

John vi. 27. Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you.

WHEN our Savior had fed five thousand people with five loaves and two fishes, they were so struck with the miracle, that they determined to proclaim him for their king—the Messiah. But he refused their offer, and got out of their way. They followed him next day to a great distance; but our Lord, who knew their hearts, told them plainly that they acted from a corrupt principle in following him, ver. 26. "Jesus said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled." There may be a great show of zeal in running after prayers and preaching, without a spark of grace. Few persons seek Christ for his own sake, or for spiritual blessings only. Many follow him for loaves, not for love. Let us beware of hypocrisy. These people had come many miles in hopes of another miracle; all their labor in coming so far was for bread. Now Christ shows them a more excellent way; he puts them upon a better plan: he bids them be more moderate in their worldly pursuits, and more diligent in their heavenly pursuits. But when he says, "Labor not for the meat which perisheth," you cannot suppose that he forbids men to labor in an honest way to get their daily bread. No; for God has laid that burden on all the children of Adam: "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread;" and "He that will not work, neither let him eat." But we are to understand it comparatively. Labor not for worldly bread in the first and chief place; it must not be our principal care and concern; and for this good reason—it perisheth: not only our necessary food, but the wealth, honor, and pleasure of the world, which men hunger for, like meat, perish; they perish in the using, and they who use them must soon perish in the grave. This

shows the folly of being too eager in the pursuit of them; and at the same time should put us upon the greatest diligence in seeking for the food of our immortal souls; even Christ himself, who is the bread of life, as he largely shows in this chapter. Now to help you in doing this we shall,

I. Consider JESUS CHRIST under the emblem of *Food*; and,

II. Inquire into the nature of that *LABOR* which is here recommended, in order to obtain it.

I. Let us consider Jesus Christ under the emblem of *Food*. As we cannot understand any thing that is *spiritual*, but as it is compared to something that is *natural*, God is pleased in his word to use many *similitudes*, whereby to set forth the excellencies of the Lord Jesus Christ, and recommend him to us. Hence he is called a *Sun*, to signify Light; a *Rock*, to signify Support; a *Refuge*, to signify Safety; and here he compares himself to *Food*. And this way of teaching not only helps us to understand spiritual things, but it serves to put us in mind of them; so that when we see the sun, it may remind us of Christ our light; and when we take our meat, it may put us in mind of Jesus, the meat which endureth to eternal life. This is part of that spiritual-mindedness, which to enjoy is life and peace. A few particulars will convince you how properly Christ is compared to food.

1. Because Christ is as necessary to the life of the soul as meat is to the support of the body. You know God has so formed our bodies, that we cannot live long without food. Christ is no less necessary for the soul; so it is written in this chapter, ver. 33, "For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world;" and again, ver. 35, "I am the bread of life;" and ver. 51, "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever." The same is asserted again and again throughout the chapter; the whole of which you will do well to read when you go home.

2. All kinds of food are the gift of God; no man in the world can make any thing eatable. Man can plant, and sow, and rear cattle; he also can cook his food with endless variety, when he has got the materials; but he can make none of them. No man can give life to a plant, or to a beast. Every thing we eat is the gift of a good God. Just so Christ, the bread of life, is the gift of God. "God gave his Son." "Blessed be God for his unspeakable gift!" The manna that God sent down to feed Is-

rael in the wilderness was a lively type of Jesus; "for the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven," ver. 33.

3. Most kinds of food are prepared for our use by *fire*. So Christ, as our sacrifice, endured, in the garden, and on the cross, the dreadful wrath of God, as "a consuming fire." This was set forth in a lively manner by the sacrifices of old, which were burnt on the altar, which represented that Christ was to be consumed by the flames of his love for his Father and his elect, and at the same time by the flames of the divine wrath against sin, which he had undertaken to bear. But the Paschal-lamb was not wholly consumed; after it was roasted with fire, it was eaten by the ancient believers; the same sacrifice which procured their safety became their food; and thus it is with us, if by faith we feed upon Christ crucified. And this leads to another remark.

4. Food must be actually received, eaten, and digested, in order to support life. It is not hearing of food, nor seeing it, nor smelling it, that will satisfy hunger or nourish the body; nor will merely hearing of Christ, nor attending ordinances, nor partaking of sacraments, nourish the soul unto eternal life. By true faith, every believer receives Christ for himself, depends upon him for his own salvation, and feeds upon him in his heart with thanksgiving. This eating is absolutely necessary to salvation, as Christ declares, ver. 53. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, ye have no life in you."

5. There is pleasure and delight in the reception of food, if persons are in health; and so there is in feeding upon Christ by faith. But then there must be spiritual health and appetite. The disordered stomach of a sick man "lotheth dainty meat;" and there are those who abhor the doctrine of salvation by Christ; but the man who is alive to God, who hungers and thirsts after righteousness, finds sweet and heavenly delight in partaking of Christ and his benefits. His love, his grace, his blood, his righteousness, his intercession, his glory, are sweeter to the taste than honey to the palate. He sits down to the Gospel table, and finds there a feast of fat things full of marrow, and can say with the spouse in the Canticles, "I sat under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."

6. We may remark, that when Christ is compared to food, it intimates the *constancy* with which believers must make use of him. Many of the businesses and pleasures

of life are occasional only; but we cannot live without "daily bread." Just so it is, that "the life we live in the flesh must be by the faith of the Son of God." "The just shall live by his faith;" and he who has once tasted that the Lord Jesus is gracious, will say, "Evermore give me this bread!"

II. We now proceed to inquire into the nature of that *labor* which Christ recommends in the text; for he not only directed the people to moderate their worldly pursuits, saying, "Labor not for the meat that perisheth," but he directed them to employ themselves diligently in the pursuit of heavenly things; as if he had said, "Labor for the meat which endureth unto eternal life." But we are not to suppose that any sort of labor is intended by which a sinner can *merit* eternal life, or that any diligence in religion will make a man worthy of Christ, or the mercy of God, through him. This is a common and a very dangerous mistake; but this would be to subvert the whole Gospel, which teaches us, that "not by works of righteousness which we have done," but "by grace are we saved, through faith; which faith itself is the gift of God." The Lord will beat down all human pride, and glory in self. He alone must be exalted in our salvation. And it is evident, from the latter part of the text, that merit is entirely out of the question; for, of this bread of life it is said—*which the Son of man shall give you*. If then it be *given*, the labor required cannot be in order to merit or purchase it.

The nature of this labor may be learned from the following verses: the people asked our Lord what it was. *What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?* They wanted to know whether he required any other works than Moses did: they thought something very *great* was necessary, which they called "the works of God;" and they seemed to think, that by some of their good deeds they might merit this bread. Now observe Christ's plain answer, *This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent*—"This is the great duty which is necessary to the acceptance of your persons and your works: this is what God commands, approves, and is the Author of; namely, that ye receive me, and rest your souls on me for salvation, as appointed of the Father for that purpose, and plainly authorized and approved by the miracles I have wrought."

FAITH, then, is the work intended. Believing in Christ is that labor which he recommends to us, in order to our living upon this heavenly food. You will ask—

What is faith? I answer in the words of the late reverend Mr. Romaine: "Faith signifies the believing the word of God. It relates to some words spoken, or to some promise made by him, and it expresses the belief which a person who hears it has of its being true. He assents to it, relies upon it, and acts accordingly. This is faith." We are to believe all that the word of God declares; but faith, as connected with salvation, chiefly relates to the divine testimony, or record of Christ, concerning Jesus Christ. All faith relates to some testimony, human or divine. Now, saith St. John, *if we receive the witness (or testimony) of men, the witness (or testimony) of God is greater: for this is the witness (or testimony) which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness*, that is, the testimony of Christ, *in himself*, in his own mind or conscience: *he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record: that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son*. 1 John v. 9—11. The Holy Spirit enlightens the mind unto the true meaning of this blessed testimony; and the believer is persuaded of its truth, excellence, and everlasting importance. He assents to it as true. He delights in it as good, and rests his eternal all on this foundation; expecting that God, who is faithful to his promise, will not suffer him to perish, but give him eternal life. Or, as the renowned Witsius expresses it, "As faith is an assent given to the divine truth, it includes in* it the acceptance of the benefit offered by the covenant of grace. Here is my Son, says God, and salvation in him: I offer him to whoever desires him, and believes that he shall find his salvation in him. Who desires him? Who believes this? I do, says the believer; I greatly long for him; I believe my salvation to be laid up in him: I take him as thus offered to me. Be it so, saith the Lord."

Perhaps you will now ask me, But why is this called labor? Is there any difficulty in all this? Yes; much every day: for,

1. Believing in him alone for salvation, is quite foreign to the notions of men, by nature, and quite contrary to the terms of the covenant of works, which all natural men are under, and to which even awakened sinners are much inclined. St. Paul laments the state of the Jews, who, "being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, would not submit themselves to

the righteousness of God." Rom. x. 3. They sought righteousness by their works, "they stumbled at the stumbling-stone." Rom. ix. 32. Now it is one of the hardest things in the world to bring off a moral, devout man from dependence on his good works, to trust his salvation on Christ alone; therefore is believing called a labor.

2. There are many other people who think that believing in Christ for salvation is too easy, cheap, and common a thing; they would rather do some hard and difficult task: something that looks great and meritorious; such as building a church, or an hospital; giving a great deal to the poor, or wearing sackcloth, or living in a monastery, or going a pilgrimage. There have been people that have walked with spikes in their shoes, and others who have burnt their children in the fire, to appease their gods. But only to believe in Christ seems too simple and easy a thing, and on that very account it is hard to them. Thus we read in the Old Testament of a Syrian general who had the leprosy, and went a long journey to be cured by Elisha the prophet. When this great man came to the door, the prophet sent out a messenger desiring him to wash in the river Jordan, and he should be healed. This you will say was an easy thing. So it was: but that very circumstance made it hard, for it put the great man in a rage. "I thought, said he, that he would surely come out to me, and stand, and call upon his God, and strike his hand over the place;" so he went away in a passion. But one of his servants wisely said, "If the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldst thou not have done it? How much rather, then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?" He took the hint, and was perfectly healed. 1 Kings v.

3. Another thing makes believing a labor. Many think that if much stress is laid upon faith, it will make people neglect good works, and so be hurtful to the interests of virtue and morality. Some think it is not amiss to talk of Christ and his merits to dying people, because they cannot live to abuse the doctrine; but that little should be preached about free grace and the blood of Christ, lest it should lead to licentiousness. Alas, for such persons! It is evident they are "the whole, who need not the physician." If ever they had been convinced of sin, and led to fear the wrath of a just and holy God, they would gladly fly to the only refuge for a sinner: and they would know by experience, that the Gospel is as good a doctrine to live by, as it is to die by. And indeed it is an

abominable reproach upon the Holy Gospel to charge it with so bad a tendency. In fact, we know from the word of God, from experience, and from observation, that faith purifies the heart, works by love, and produces all the fruits of righteousness and goodness.

4. But the great thing that makes believing in Christ so laborious, is, the awful view that a convinced sinner often has of his guilt. He sees he has broken the law of God, and is exposed to its dreadful curse. He knows the corruption of his nature, and the plague of his heart. He feels that his heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. He ranks himself among the chief of sinners; thinks there is not another sinner in the world so bad as himself; he fears there is something singular in his case: perhaps he is ready to fear that he has committed the unpardonable sin: he complains that he is beset with blasphemous thoughts: and on all these, and perhaps on many other accounts, is afraid there is no help for him in God.

Besides, the Devil is very busy with a convinced sinner. He is afraid of losing a subject; and as it was of old with a young man who was coming to Christ for a bodily cure, "while he was yet a coming, the Devil threw him down and tare him;" so Satan tries all his skill, and employs all his agents, to keep the soul from Christ; he will oppose nothing so much as his flying to Christ by faith.

Add to these difficulties one more. The convinced and enlightened soul, who is fully persuaded there is no salvation but in Christ, is apt to think it would be presumption in him to go to Christ, as he is so guilty, so filthy, so unworthy. He thinks, when he is more reformed, more deeply humbled, and has obtained more knowledge and sanctity, then he may venture to hope in Christ. But this is a great mistake, a hurtful error; it is turning the Gospel upside down. The sinner's first business is to fly to Christ; to believe the record of God concerning him; to believe that his blood cleanseth from all sin; that every coming sinner will be welcome; Christ casteth out none that come to him.

These considerations fully show how properly our blessed Lord speaks in the text, *LABOR for the meat which endureth to eternal life*. And yet, blessed be God, who is "the Author and Finisher of our faith;" he can render this easy to the soul, by the power of his holy Spirit; for "he worketh in us both to will and to do according to his good pleasure." "Our sufficiency," in this respect, "is of God:"

and hard as it may seem at first, it becomes easier as we continue in the school of Christ, and there "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus."

APPLICATION.

1. **THIS** subject *reproves* us. So our Lord intended it; so let us receive it. How many among us labor hard! but for what? A morsel of bread. Six long days in a week are spent in toil, to procure a few shillings. All this is right. This is no more than what God requires. "Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work." But is this all? Is there no concern for the soul? Do not think, my dear friends, that laboring for the body will excuse you from "the one thing needful," which is "the care of the soul." You must mind both worlds; and both will be best minded, when they are minded together. "Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things (food and raiment) shall be added to you." Think of the vanity of this world. Remember that earthly things perish in the using: but Christ, the bread of life, endureth for ever; and he that eateth of this bread shall never die.

2. Do you ask, How shall I get faith? I answer, It is the gift of God, and is to be sought for by earnest prayer, and daily attention to the Gospel, the word of faith. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Attend, therefore, where Christ is preached. Christ's sheep know his voice; they know it from a stranger's voice. May you learn to distinguish; and while you listen to the truth, pray earnestly that the Holy Spirit of truth may enlighten your minds, and enable you to mix faith with it; so shall it profit your souls.

3. We may also learn from this text that many labor in vain, even in religion. They follow after righteousness; they want to be good, and hope to be saved; but they attain not their desires. What is the matter? "They seek it not by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law," Rom. ix. 31. Avoid this rock, on which so many split; and remember, that the first business in religion is, to believe in Jesus. Begin with Christ, and every thing will follow in its due order.

4. To conclude. Have any of you by precious faith received Christ? Do you take him as the bread of life, the food of poor souls? Rejoice then in the assurance which God gives you of eternal life. Those who ate the manna in the wilderness all died; but, saith Christ, ver. 51, *I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall*

live for ever. Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. Believe this, and be happy.

And now, what doth the Lord require of thee, happy believer in Jesus? He requireth thee to walk in his ways, and labor in his service. When Elijah was ready to starve, the Lord provided food for him; he ate, and drank, and laid down to rest. The angel touched him a second time, and said, "Arise, and eat, because the journey is too great for thee. And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went, in the strength of that meat, forty days and forty nights, unto the mount of God." 1 Kings xix. 7, 8. Thus, Christian, feed upon Christ, "whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed," and in the strength derived from Jesus, thou shalt "run without weariness, and walk without fainting," till thou reach the mountain of God, and sit down at the marriage-feast of the Lamb.

"Jesus, we bow before thy feet;
Thy table is divinely stor'd;
Thy sacred flesh our souls have eat;
'Tis living bread; we thank thee, Lord!
"Joy to the Master of the feast;
His name our souls for ever bless;
To God the King, and God the Priest,
A loud Hosanna round the place."

PRAYER.—O God, we thank thee for the meat which perisheth, and by which our perishing bodies are sustained during our continuance in the present world; but we thank thee still more for the meat which endureth to everlasting life, and which is the free gift of Jesus Christ to a lost world. O that we may sincerely cry "Evermore give us of this bread," this bread of life, which came down from Heaven; and of which, if any man by faith partake, he shall not die, but live for ever!

O let us not be indifferent, or careless, with regard to this food. We labor, and use diligence, for the supply of our bodily wants; may we be still more diligent to obtain food for our souls. May we carefully improve Sabbaths, Bibles, Sermons, and all the means of grace; and, while using these, may the Holy Spirit of grace and truth enlighten our minds, and glorify Christ in our hearts, that, daily feeding by faith on him, we may be strengthened to pursue our Christian course, and finally obtain everlasting life.

SERMON XXIII.

A SINNER CHANGED BY GRACE.

1 Pet. iv. 3, 4.—For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries: wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.

SIN, that accursed thing, Sin, was the occasion of our Savior's death; and he

died, not only to save us from guilt, that we might not be condemned, but to save us also from its power, that it might not rule over us. This double benefit of the Redeemer's death was signified by the water and the blood which issued from his pierced side; for St. John observes, 1 John v. 6, "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood." By the *blood*, we are justified from the guilt of sin; by the *water*, our polluted nature is purified. Thus is Jesus a complete Savior. Both these are equally necessary; and what God has joined together, let no man put asunder; for as they were united in the Redeemer's design, so are they united in the experience of all who believe. When a sinner is awakened and brought to Christ for pardon, then he also feels an earnest desire for this second benefit of his death, a deliverance from the power of sin. So St. Peter teaches us in this chapter, v. 1. *Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind*; that is, all Christians should be armed with the same resolution against sin, and for holiness, as Christ was. But Christ having suffered in the flesh for sin, lived in the spirit unto God; therefore should we also cease from sin, and live no more to *the lust of men, but to the will of God*; for, saith the Apostle, "the time past of our life may suffice." Yes, we have had enough, and too much of sin: it has taken up too much of our time and affection; henceforth may we live to God. In these useful words we have the four following things:

- I. The walk of a natural man described.
- II. The great change that grace makes in such a man.
- III. The reasonableness of that change: and
- IV. The usage which a changed person may expect from the world.

I. The walk of a natural man described—*He works the will of the Gentiles, and lives in sin*. It is not certain whether St. Peter wrote this epistle to the Jews only, or to Gentiles also; nor is it of any consequence to us; for there is no great difference between a carnal Jew, a carnal Gentile, or a carnal Christian. All unconverted people live not according to the will of God. The will of God is the proper rule of our actions; but who inquires after this? who says with converted Saul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" No natural man says so; only those, who, like Saul, "are converted to God." And here

is the grand difference between *real Christians* and all other people. The latter *walk according to the flesh*; the former, *according to the Spirit*; for, as Paul largely shows in the 8th chapter to the Romans, *they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit*. And what are all the thoughts, words, desires, pursuits, and delights of carnal men about, but something of a fleshly kind: they have no knowledge of, nor care for, no delight in, any thing that is spiritual or heavenly, nor can they, while in that state; for as our Lord says, John iii. 6, *That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit*. Till a man is born again, he works the will of the Gentiles; he walks according to the flesh. The Lord, in his mercy, discover to those who are in this state the danger of it, and deliver them out of it by his changing grace!

Observe in the text, *the readiness with which men sin*; they *run* to it, it is their delight; their feet are swift to do evil, while to every thing good they are dull and slow.—Observe also, that men sin in *company*, and encourage each other in sin: "they think it strange that ye run not *with them*." Adam fell in company, and for the sake of company; and all his children are not only corrupt, but corrupters; beware then of "evil communications, which corrupt good manners," and take the wise man's advice, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." Remark likewise the *constancy* with which men sin; they "wrought the will of the Gentiles:" they worked at sin as a man works at his trade, not occasionally, but daily. Hence sinners are called *workers of iniquity*, and as such sentenced, by Christ the Judge, to eternal misery.

Let us now take notice of the particulars of this wicked course. *Lasciviousness* is first mentioned. This means wantonness expressed in looks, words, and actions. *Lusts*, or criminal desires and pursuits after unlawful embraces. *Excess of wine*; that is, immoderate drinking of any strong liquors. *Revelling and Banquetings*, feasting with songs and music, including the amusement of the playhouse, and similar diversions, which are Satan's traps to catch unwary souls. *Abominable idolatries*, or the worship of idols, which is an abominable affront to the only living and true God; and which was generally attended with abominable lewdness and drunkenness, and other vices. These were the practices of the heathen;

and are they not also the practices of many called Christians? Is there not in every place some persons who run to this excess of riot? O, that such may see the error of their ways, and cry to the Lord for his mercy and grace! And this is next to be considered.

II. *The great change that the grace of God makes in a natural man.*

The change we mean is far more than the mere reformation of a sinner's life; it is an inward, supernatural change, wrought by the Spirit of God, and by means of the Gospel of Christ. So we read, ver. 6, of this chapter, *For this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead*; that is, to those believers who were dead when St. Peter wrote, as well as to those who were then living: *that they might be judged according to men in the flesh*; that they might judge and condemn themselves for their fleshly lusts, and mortify their carnal appetites; and so be *dead to sin, but live according to God in the Spirit*; that being quickened from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, they might, being helped by the Spirit, be conformed to the will of God, and do those things which are pleasing in his sight.

It is by the preaching of the Gospel that this change is generally effected; for it is the Gospel only, which is "the power of God to salvation." This is God's mighty instrument for "pulling down the strong hold of the devil," for opening men's eyes, and turning them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

The sinner is usually first alarmed by the Law, as contained in the ten commandments. If his eyes are opened by the Spirit of God, he sees that "the law is spiritual," and reaches to the secret thoughts of his heart; and that having broken the law, he is under its curse. This, though before he was "alive without the law," the commandment comes with power to his conscience, sin revives, and he dies: that is, he now sees he is a dead man in law; justly condemned to eternal death on account of his sins.

But the law alone is insufficient to destroy the power of sin. The Gospel is the instrument employed by the Holy Spirit for this purpose. Sin never appears to the believer so sinful as when he beholds Christ crucified for it. Jesus Christ, as crucified for sin, was the grand subject of apostolic preaching. The first ministers of Christ "determined to know nothing among the people but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." And O, how glorious were

the triumphs of the cross! It was this which subdued the hearts of poor, wretched, beastly, devilish men, among the heathen. Those who had wallowed in the filth of sin, and reduced human nature to the most degraded state, became holy, humble, chaste, temperate, honest, pious, gentle, useful men. This it was that changed St. Paul from a bloody persecutor of the saints to an humble disciple and flaming preacher of Christ. So he says, Gal. vi. 14. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." So that every believer may say and sing,

"It was the sight of thy dear cross
First wean'd my heart from earthly things.
And taught me to esteem as dross
The mirth of fools and pomp of kings."

And this shows that the very first business of a convinced sinner, who "hungers and thirsts after righteousness," is to come to Christ. We have no strength and ability in ourselves, by nature, to become holy, and subdue our sins; we must begin to live to God in a new way, by faith in Christ. The efforts of a natural man towards holiness are all forced and unnatural; we must have a new nature and new powers; and these we can have only in and from Christ, and by virtue of union to him, through faith. Christ dwells in the hearts of believers, and they dwell in him. They are "Members of his body, and are so joined to him as to become one spirit." They are branches of Christ the tree; separate from him they can do nothing: but from union to him proceed all their good works, and sincere acceptable obedience. Thus the soul is brought to cleave to Christ with purpose of heart, to hate every false way, and to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this present evil world. This is the great change that grace makes.

III. *We proceed to speak of the reasonableness of this change.*

"The time past, (says our holy apostle) the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles." Not as if sin was entitled to any portion of our short and mortal lives. No. A moment given to sin is a moment too much. But it may well be said, "the time past" may suffice; for,

"Sin is a dreadful waste of precious time. Life is very short." Time flies on swift wings; and when once gone, is gone for ever. We can never recall a lost hour. And yet, how is time squandered away!

O visit dying beds, to learn the value of time. What would some dying people give for a few weeks or a few hours? There have been instances of rich men, who have offered physicians half their estates, if they could prolong their lives for a few weeks! And what is "the worm that never dies," but the horrid remorse of a damned sinner, reflecting, with intolerable anguish, upon the loss of his time and abuse of his mercies in a life of sin!

Sin is also a *useless* thing. "What fruit had ye?" said St. Paul to the converted Roman; "what fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" What profit, honor, or, pleasure, did ye find in your former sinful courses, even while pursuing them? Were they not attended with remorse, trouble, mischief, and stings of conscience? And what bitter fruits do they produce in reflection! as holy Job says, "Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the sins of my youth!" Sin is extremely *hurtful* and *dangerous* to ourselves and others. The sinner is like "the madman, who casteth abroad fire-brands, arrows, and death, and saith, Am I not in sport? You would shudder to see a child playing with a razor, or with the fire; or standing on the brink of a deep precipice at the sea-side! Yet such is the state of every man in his sins. Such was once our state: and may not the time past suffice to have wrought the will of the flesh, yea the will of the devil, who was aiming at our destruction? "for the end of those things is death:" the direct tendency and due desert of these sinful practices is nothing less than death temporal and eternal. How dreadfully mischievous is the sinner to his neighbor! He cannot be content to perish alone. Like the Devil, he labors to bring others into the same condemnation with himself. He is a soul-murderer. What a melancholy reflection to a considerate mind!—Perhaps there are souls now in hell, who perished by my means. It was the dread of such a reflection that probably made Dives wish that a message might be sent to his five brethren, to prevent their coming to that place of torment; for it is likely they had been led into sin by his infidel counsel and wicked example; and he knew that, if they came there, they would upbraid him as the author of their ruin. Now surely the time past may suffice to have been so hurtful to ourselves and others.

It is also reasonable to forsake sin, "because it is so highly dishonorable to the blessed God." Surely God deserves to be

loved and obeyed by all his creatures; but sin is an act of robbery; it defrauds God of his just rights, and transfers to Satan the obedience due to him. It is an act of treason and rebellion against the Majesty of heaven. Yea, it is a kind of *atheism*; for in vain we profess "to know God, if in works we deny him;" if we live in sin, we live "without God in the world."

Once more, a life of sin is directly "contrary to our Christian profession." Why do we call ourselves Christians, if we neither obey nor resemble Christ? Why call we him Master and Lord, if we do not the things which he commands? Were we not baptized unto Christ? and does not our baptism signify "a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness?" a renouncing the world, the flesh, and the devil? To be a Christian indeed, is to be a follower of Christ, to have the same mind in us as was in him, and to walk even as he walked; but what a horrid contradiction there is in such names or characters as these—a drunken Christian—a lying Christian—a lewd Christian—a profane Christian. It is said of Alexander the Great, that he had a soldier in his army of his own name, but understanding that he was a base cowardly fellow, he called him into his presence, and reproaching him with cowardice, said, "Either change your name, or fight better!" And how properly might the great and holy Redeemer say to wicked men, professing to be Christians, Renounce the name of Christians, or live better! How reasonable then is it to forsake sin, seeing it is such a waste of precious time; so useless, so hurtful to ourselves and others; so dishonorable to God; and so contrary to our holy profession as Christians? Rather let us obey the exhortation of St. Paul, Rom. xii. 1. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service;" it is fit and right, as we are the creatures of God, the author of all our powers, and especially if we are partakers of his grace and love in Christ Jesus;—"for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen!"

IV. Lastly, we are to consider *the usage which a changed person may expect to meet with from a wicked world*: "they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot; speaking evil of you, they wonder what is come to you, that you have so suddenly forsaken their company and their pleasures; they cannot account for such a strange alteration, and

they despise you as stiff, unsociable, foolish creatures, or as mad enthusiasts.

Now here observe, that where such a change as this takes place, it is visible; for if the world did not see it, they could not hate it. And indeed, when persons who have lived in open sin become serious and holy, the change cannot be hid. It is said of Barnabas, that "when he came to Antioch, and had *seen* the grace of God, he was glad: the grace of God, as a spiritual principle in the heart, cannot be seen by bodily eyes; but the effects of it in a holy life and conversation must and will be seen. Christians, however humbled and retired, are like "a city set upon a hill, which cannot be hid;" they are like "a candle that giveth light unto all that are in the house;" and their "light must so shine before men, that they may see their good works, and glorify their Father who is in heaven." *Matt. v. 14, 15, 16.* Yes, the change we speak of will be observed. Carnal companions will be deserted, places of vain amusement forsaken. No oath or filthy jest, or light expression, will proceed from the mouth; the places where the Gospel is preached will be frequented, the Sabbath day will be carefully kept holy, and the whole behavior and appearance will be such as become godliness.

This will excite hatred. "The carnal mind is enmity against God," and every thing godly, and godlike. When God permits, persecution will follow; and if this is not public by the magistrate (which blessed be God, our laws prevent) yet relations, friends, and neighbors, show their dislike. "Every one who is godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution;" so the Scripture declares, and so serious persons will be sure to find it. Nor let them wonder or be offended at this, for from the beginning it was so. "He that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit." And every believer must bear the cross; if not *Abel's* cross, yet *Isaac's*; if not martyrdom, yet mocking. *They think it strange*, and then *speak evil*: perhaps they will falsely accuse you; they will say you are hypocrites, and take up a profession of religion to answer some wicked purposes. But be not offended; this is rather "a token for good," on your behalf, while, on theirs, it is an awful evidence of their Christless, dangerous state; for, as it follows in the next verse, "They shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead;" they must answer for all "their ungodly deeds and hard speeches;" and what will they answer to Jesus, on whom

their reproaches fall, when he shall say, "Why persecute ye me?" Let persecutors consider how they will answer this.

APPLICATION.

WE have considered, in the first place, the walk of a *natural man*; and may we not say, Lord, what is man! What a wretched, fallen, guilty creature is man! How is our nature depraved, which inclines us to such a course, and what abundant cause is there for mourning and lamentation on this account. And say, my friends, what sort of a walk is *ours*? Whose will do we follow? Is it the will of the flesh, or the will of God? Which of these do *you* consult? Do you consider in your daily walk, Will this action I am going to do, this pleasure I am going to take, please God or not? Can I ask his blessing upon it? Are you not rather led captive by your sinful passions, your sensual inclinations, and the custom of the world? But you plainly see from the text that this way leads to destruction, and you must forsake it, or perish.

Learn also that *the commonness of sin affords no excuse for it*. The will of the Gentiles, or the way of the world, is the broad way to ruin. Follow not the multitude to do evil. Forsake the foolish and live. The narrow road that leads to heaven has but few travellers; God grant we may be found among the number!

From what has been said, the *necessity of regeneration* evidently appears. Is the heart of man so corrupt? Is he so strongly inclined to the will of the world, and the beastly lusts of the flesh? what then can effect an entire change and alteration, first in the heart, and then in the life? "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" With man this is impossible; but nothing is too hard for the Lord. The people to whom St. Peter wrote had felt this change, and so have thousands in all ages. For this purpose the Lord hath sent his Gospel hither. Salvation has come to this house. To you is the word of this salvation sent. The Lord open your hearts, as he did Lydia's, to attend to the word. Which of you is willing to be saved; to be saved *now*; to be saved from sin; to be saved by Jesus? He is able to save to the uttermost; it is his office to save; it is his delight to save; and therefore he sends us, in his name, to invite you to come to him; to beseech you to be reconciled to God. Come, then, fellow-sinners, all things are ready. Come to this great and loving Savior, and he will wash you from all your past sins in the fountain of his precious blood, and give you a new

heart, a heart to love him, and walk in his holy pleasant ways. O, that we could persuade you to forsake your sins, and come to Jesus for life. But this is his work. The Lord make you "willing in the day of his power."

Christians! with what holy shame and grief may you review the former part of your lives! May not "the time past suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles?" Did you not live long enough in sin? Ah, you will say, too, too long! O, the vanity of my childhood and youth! O, misspent sabbaths! O, my youthful wantonness, lusts, and revellings. I look back upon them with a mixture of shame and indignation. I blush to lift up my face to a holy God. I smite my breast with the publican, and say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Well, God has been merciful to you. Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? O, what debtors are we to the free, sovereign, almighty grace of Jesus. You were dead in trespasses and sins: you hath he quickened, and saved by his grace. "Such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of our God." 1 Cor. vi. 11.

And now, my friends, what doth the Lord require of us? Have we lost so much time while we were in our sins? O let us be doubly diligent in future. Let us redeem the time, for the days are few and evil. Let us be active for God, for our own souls, and for others. Let us lay ourselves out for usefulness. And instead of *running* with the wicked in the ways of sin, let us run with enlarged hearts in the ways of God. Let us exhort one another daily, and so much the more as we see the day approaching. Let us provoke one another to love and to good works. Let us prove our love to Jesus, our great Deliverer, by holy obedience and grateful praise.

PRAYER.—Most holy God, we acknowledge with shame and grief the depravity of our nature, which inclines us to pursue the broad way that leads to destruction. We have followed the devices and desires of our own hearts too much, and walked according to the course of this vain and wicked world. But we desire that the time past may suffice to have acted this base and foolish part. We now perceive that we have wasted much of our precious time, and that sin is a useless, hurtful, and dangerous thing, dishonorable to thee our God, and contrary to our Christian profession;—create in us, therefore, we beseech thee, clean hearts, and renew right spirits within us; make us new creatures, and write thy holy law on our minds, that so the rest of our lives may be pure and holy. Help us, by thy Spirit, to mortify the deeds of the body, and to crucify

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the old man with his fleshly lusts; and being united to Christ by faith, may we obey his precepts, and imitate his example. Grant, we beseech thee, that we may so faithfully serve thee in this life, that we fail not finally to attain thy heavenly promises, through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SERMON XXIV.

DIVES AND LAZARUS:

OR, THE SUFFICIENCY OF SCRIPTURE FOR THE PURPOSES OF SALVATION.

(Intended as a check to Infidelity.)

Luke xvi. 31. If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

ETERNITY is at hand! Let us take a view of it—A view set before us by Jesus Christ himself: by him "who brought life and immortality to light," and who best knew how to describe the state of a saint in heaven, and a sinner in hell. Our text is the close of a parable, designed to reprove the Pharisees, who were covetous and worldly. Here we have an account of a very wicked man, who was rich, and a very good man, who was poor. Death came and ended all the pleasures of the one, and all the pains of the other. The rich man, being in hell, desires the poor man may be sent from heaven to convert his brethren on earth; but he is told in these words, that if they will not mind their Bible, they would mind nothing else. This text, my friends, is chosen on purpose to recommend the Bible to you, that you may not neglect the only book, which, under God, is able to save your souls.

We read in the 19th verse—"There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day." It is not a sin to be rich; nor is it a sin for the rich to wear handsome clothes, nor keep good tables: but it is very dangerous to the soul to be rich; because those who have much of the world are tempted to love the world too much, to forget God, and to neglect their souls. A life of ease, pleasure, and honor, is so contrary to a life of faith, repentance, and self-denial, that few rich men are saved.

Ver. 20, 21. "And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores." Learn from this, that we cannot judge of any man's state,

before God, by his circumstances in the present world. A wicked man may be very prosperous, and a good man may be in great affliction. Poor *Lazarus* was *helpless* indeed, as his name signifies: it is hard to be poor, but harder still to be sick and poor. *Lazarus* could not work, or he would not have begged. He could not even walk. Somebody was kind enough to bring him to the rich man's gate (for there was no parish relief in those days) in hopes that he would be observed, pitied, and relieved. Poor *Lazarus* was very modest and humble. A bit of broken meat was all he wanted; but this was denied. The wanton pampered dogs came and licked his running sores; which shows that he had not a bit of linen to cover them, and keep them from the air; and he was so weak that he could not keep off the dogs, which seemed ready to devour him.

What a picture is this of a hard-hearted rich man, and a patient beggar! "Dives could not plead that he was oppressed by a number of beggars, for *Lazarus* was alone; nor that he was unknown to him, for he lies at the gate; nor could he say he was idle, and might work, for he lay helpless on the ground; nor that he wanted a great deal, for he would have been contented with crumbs: not that his servants took care of him, for not one of them relieves him!" Well! if man will not pity, God will.

"It came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom."

No doubt, death was welcome to him. He had nothing in this world to set his heart upon; that is an advantage which the poor have above the rich. Poor *Lazarus* sunk at last under his heavy burdens. Perhaps his wounds mortified; or he might be starved to death. But blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; they cease from their labors and troubles, and are at rest. Angels, who are ministering spirits to the saints, carried his departing soul to glory; where, like an honored guest at a feast, he was placed next to the father of the faithful, in whose steps no doubt he had trod, having been a partaker of the same precious faith in Christ.

The rich man also died, and was buried. "Riches profit not in the day of wrath." Money will not bribe death. Dives was bound to the world by a thousand silken cords and golden chains; but death broke them all in a moment, and hurried away his guilty, unprepared soul to the torments of hell. What availed his pompous funeral? The pampered carcass must be the

food of worms, while his wretched spirit is confined in the region of despair.

"And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and *Lazarus* in his bosom; and he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send *Lazarus*, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." Ver. 23, 24.

His eyes, once fixed on earth and earthly things, and which were always turned away from God and his word, are now forced to look upward: and the glimmering of light only serves to discover, at a dreadful distance, the happiness he had lost by his sins, and the bliss of that neglected child of God, who once lay and perished at his gate.

Observe. Now he prays. He should have prayed on earth, then he would have been heard. He prays to a saint; he should have prayed to God. He pleads relation to Abraham, calling him Father. Church privileges, or relation to pious people, will not save wicked professors. He asks for *mercy*, but he asks too late; the door of mercy is for ever shut. He does not expect deliverance, he asks only a moment's partial ease; but this he asks in vain; and how just it is, that he who refused a crumb, should be denied a drop! Observe the answer—ver. 25. "Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime received thy good things, and likewise *Lazarus* evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented."

Mark this well, you who place your happiness in eating and drinking, and putting on fine clothes. Are these *our* "good things?" Poor portion indeed! No man can have a greater curse than to be rich, and take his pleasure, and enjoy himself continually, if this be his all; if his heart is set on these things, while he lives in sin, neglects his soul, and is alienated from the life of God. The remembrance of such a carnal state will be the hell of hell. Remorse for such cursed folly is "the worm that never dies," and will add fuel to the fire that shall never be quenched. *Lazarus* had all his evil things on earth. He had borne the cross, as every one must do, who follows Christ. Not that he was saved by his poverty and afflictions. There is no merit in these things. Christ alone can save us from our sins; and there are many who are miserable here, who will be miserable also in hell. But *Lazarus* was a pardoned sinner, and was born of God. Perhaps his afflictions led him to God; and it is happy for poor people when their

troubles are sanctified to them, when they learn the evil of sin in the evil of suffering, and having no comfort of a worldly kind, seek comfort in the knowledge of Christ and true religion.

"And besides all this, said Abraham, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence;" ver. 26. Awful separation! Now saints and sinners meet in the same church; but the distinction will soon be made, and no more intercourse be suffered for ever. The kindest relation, the dearest friend, cannot come to speak one word of comfort to the lost soul; nor can the prisoner of hell ever make his escape, or obtain a release for a single hour. But though the miseries of the damned admit of no relief, they are capable of addition. Should their relations come thither, seduced to sin by their counsel or example, it would add to their torments. This was what Dives dreaded, and therefore he cries to Abraham, ver. 27, 28. "I pray thee, therefore, Father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment."

Dives felt the hell which he formerly disbelieved. He had made a jest of hell many a time, and laughed at the fears of religious people, and their pains to avoid it. He had taught his brothers to do the same; and encouraged by his example to persist in a sinful course, he had reason to expect each of them would follow him to hell, accuse him as their tempter, and charge their ruin to him. This, he knew, would increase his sufferings.

Let this be a warning to those who encourage their acquaintance to drunkenness, whoredom, dishonesty, or other sins. Great is the guilt of enticing others to sin, and great will be their torment, when a new sufferer arrives to lay his ruin at their door.

Ver. 29. "Abraham saith unto him, they have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." From this answer it is plain, that in the judgment of Christ there was enough in the Scriptures of the Old Testament to convince men that there is another life after this; a future state of rewards and punishments, whatever some pretend to the contrary. It was the privilege of the Jews to have this testimony; it was sufficient for their conviction; and it was the sin and ruin of those who disregarded it. We, my friends, have the same advantage, and a much greater added to it. We have Christ, the Evangelists and the Apostles; let us hear them.

Dives was not satisfied with this reply but said, ver. 30, "Nay, Father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." He carries with him to hell the same slight thoughts he had of the Bible when on earth. He presumes to be wiser than God, and to dictate a more effectual mean of conversion than God was pleased to appoint. It is as if he had said, "They do not mind the Bible; its doctrines, commands, and threatenings, are grown familiar to them; nay, they make a jest of it all. But an apparition would startle them: if Lazarus, whom they knew to be a good man, were to appear to them, and tell them how happy he is in heaven, and how miserable I am in hell, they would be alarmed, converted, and forsake their sins."

Observe, now, the final answer that Abraham gives—"If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." This answer well suits the present times; when many wicked men, with a boldness unknown in former days, try to rob us of our Bibles, and cheat us out of eternal life. There is nothing new, my friends, under the sun. The Devil began his works of destruction by persuading Eve to disbelieve the word of God. He has carried on his murderous designs by the same means ever since: and he is making a bold push, by his infamous agents at this day, to keep people in their sins, by denying the truth of Scripture, and so taking away all motives to true religion, arising from the hope of heaven or the fear of hell.

Consider for a moment *what* the Scriptures testify—*Why* we should receive their testimony, and—that if *their* testimony is rejected, no other would be effectual.

The Scriptures certainly testify that the soul of man does not die with the body—that there is a glorious heaven and a dreadful hell. It seems that Dives laughed at all this; perhaps you do. Certainly he did not believe it, or why should Lazarus be sent to certify it to his brethren? Had he believed it, he would have led a very different life: he would not have lived a life of luxury, but a life of self-denial and holiness; nor could he have been so hard-hearted to the poor. Do we believe there is a hell for sinners? We shall fly from the wrath to come. Do we believe there is a heaven for the people of God? We shall strive to enter in. Let our practice, sirs, prove whether we are believers or infidels. Where there is faith there must be works. All the rest is *hypocrisy*.

The Scriptures also testify that all mankind are, by the fall of Adam, in a polluted, apostate state: guilty before God, and

exposed to his dreadful anger. But they also testify that God has so loved the world as to send his Son to be a Savior—to satisfy divine justice by shedding his blood; and that he has sent his Spirit also to renew by his grace the hearts of men, and make them new creatures: and that whoever believes in the Son of God shall not perish in hell, but be saved from sin and brought to glory. Many other things the Scriptures teach, but these are the greatest.

Now, my brethren, if we are asked why we believe these things? we are able to give a reason of the hope that is in us. There is no evidence, that an unbeliever, like Dives, can now desire, that has not already been given. Dives asked for a miracle, God wrought many miracles by Moses, and more by Jesus Christ; and these are more credible than the apparition of a deceased friend would be. Moses performed many miracles in Egypt and the Wilderness; for the truth of which he appeals to the whole multitude of Israel. Now, is it possible that a million of people could be persuaded that they saw and heard things which they did not see nor hear? Would they not have contradicted him? Could they, for instance, have believed that they had passed through the Red Sea, and that they had subsisted upon manna, in a miraculous manner, for many years, and their garments had not worn out, if no such things had happened?

But not to dwell on Moses or the prophets, let us consider the wonderful works of Jesus Christ; who, by the way, confirms the character of Moses; so that the character of Moses and of Christ must stand or fall together.

Jesus Christ appealed to his miracles for the proofs of his mission. To the disciples of John, who inquired whether he were the true Messiah or not, he said, "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them." Matt. xi. 4, 5. All these things are truly miraculous, and such as Divine Power alone is able to perform: but they were perfectly easy to him, and they fully proved his divine authority. These things were not done in a corner; they were done openly, and some of them before thousands of witnesses. His great enemies, the Jews, could not, did not, deny them; they only wickedly ascribed them to the power of the Devil. The Evangelists wrote an account of these miracles in the very country where they were per-

formed, and near the time; so that if they had not been done, thousands would have risen up and contradicted their testimony. The Apostles went forth into various countries, preaching the Gospel of Christ, and confirming its truth by their miraculous works; and surely they cannot be accused of priestcraft. Did not they, as well as the prophets, forfeit the esteem of men and endure great hardships, even death itself? And was not their whole conduct an evidence of their sincerity?

But our faith does not rest only on the miracles. Prophecy, or predicting events long before they happened, is a proof equally strong. We could give many unanswerable proofs of this kind, but our limits forbid.

The excellent effects of the Christian religion, wherever it is truly received, is another argument in its favor. We daily see, that by the preaching the Gospel sinners are converted to God; that bad men are made good men; they become "new creatures," as the Scripture calls them. So it was at the first; some of the greatest persecutors became Christians, and whole nations forsook their idols; and thousands in those nations forsook their detestable practices, and became sober, just, devout, and benevolent. Now, this is a continued miracle; we see it wrought to this day. May God give you, my friends, to know the power of divine truth in your own hearts, and its holy influence upon your temper and conduct, and then you will bear the witness or testimony in yourselves to the truth of Christianity; and this will be more satisfactory than all other evidences put together.

And now say, my friends, if any other, any new testimony is wanting, to confirm the truth of Scripture. Dives wished that a person might rise from the dead to convince his brethren; and perhaps there are some people in America who would wish the same. Suppose God should grant their wish. Suppose that in the silent hours of darkness something should appear, something exactly like one of our friends, whom we knew was dead, and buried a month before. Suppose he should say, "I am such a one—I am come to tell you that there is a holy God—there is a glorious heaven—there is a dreadful hell.—Forsake your sins, and believe in Jesus, or you will perish for ever!" What effect do you think such a vision would have? Probably it would frighten you to death; or if you survived it, and were deeply impressed with it, it is likely that the cares and pleasures of life would wear off the impression

in a little time. As to your friends, they would not believe you; they would try to laugh or reason you out of your fancies; they would say it was a dream, or you were mad; and if your heart were not changed by grace, you would yourself begin to doubt, and judge that you were somehow or other imposed upon; so would you remain just what you are, or perhaps become worse.

But not to argue on supposition, let us resort to matter of fact. The experiment has been tried, and was ineffectual. You remember to have read, in the 11th of John, an account of the resurrection of another Lazarus, who lived and died at Bethany, about two miles from Jerusalem. Jesus Christ went to his tomb, and, in the presence of many people, cried aloud, "Lazarus, come forth;" the dead heard the voice of the Son of God, and lived; he that had been dead four days came forth in his shroud, and walked home to his house. This miracle was never denied; it was acknowledged and dreaded by the chief priests and rulers: the neighbors saw him, conversed with him, ate and drank with him; but what effect had it? Some indeed believed; others turned informers, and went and told his enemies, who said, "this man doth many miracles; if we let him alone, all men will believe on him." From that day, therefore, they sought to murder him. So that we see outward evidence alone, however strong, is insufficient of itself to produce faith in the carnal heart.

Take another instance. Our Lord Jesus often declared that he would rise again upon the third day after his death. The appointed hour arrived, and behold there was a great earthquake, the Savior rose, the keepers, the soldiers were terrified, they became as dead men! But were *they* converted? No; the chief priest and elders hired the soldiers, who saw the resurrection, to tell a lie, and say, that while they slept, the disciples of Jesus stole him away. A foolish lie it was, for, if they were asleep, as they pretended, how could they know what happened? and if not asleep, the pretended robbery was impossible: for it proves that the most sensible, the most awful evidence will not convince or convert men, without the concurrent operation of the Holy Spirit. In like manner, we might show that the most singular and awful providences, such as the death of near relations, and remarkable escapes from death, and the most dreadful views of eternity, and the most solemn vows and

resolutions made at such times, prove insufficient to make men truly religious.

Let us now hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Be thankful for your Bible; prize your Bible; read and study your Bible daily, praying to God to give you his Spirit, that you may rightly understand it, and be thereby made wise unto salvation. Avoid bad books and bad men as you would poison. Regard not their objections; they can make none that have not been answered a thousand times. Their cavils are mere trifling, like a man who despises such a building as St. Paul's church, on account of a small flaw or two in the surface of a stone. The Scriptures are fulfilling daily before your eyes; and the very objections of infidels are a proof of their truth; for, as our Savior declared, "Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil;" and this is the grand source of infidelity, ancient and modern. Sinners are against the Bible, because the Bible is against them.

Read this parable again when you go home; and learn from it not to envy sinners, however rich and prosperous. Repine not at poverty; but pray it may be sanctified to your soul's benefit. Be content with the evidence God hath given you of a future state; be concerned, by faith in Jesus, to avoid the miseries of hell; and to be made meet, by the grace of God, to enjoy, with all the redeemed, the unspeakable joys of the heavenly world, for ever and for ever. God grant this may be the happiness of each of us, for Christ's sake. Amen!

PRAYER.—GLORIOUS God! we thank thee for setting before us, in thy word, these great things which belong to our peace. We have seen, in this parable, what will be the end of the righteous and of the wicked. Suffer us not to be like the rich sinner, who had his portion in this life. Rather would we resemble the poor sufferer, whose evil things were confined to the present world. O let us not make provision for the flesh, and be anxious about what we shall eat, drink, and wear, while we are neglecting our souls and their salvation; for what would it profit us, could we gain the whole world and lose our own souls?—but enable us, we beseech thee, by thy Holy Spirit, to take heed to thy word. We have not only Moses and the prophets, but we have also Christ and the apostles; we have those Scriptures which are able to make us wise unto salvation. O may we thereby be effectually taught to flee from the wrath to come; to flee to Jesus Christ, as our refuge and our righteousness, that, being found in him, and made meet for glory, we may, when removed by death, sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the heavenly kingdom. O grant us this happiness for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

SERMON XXV.

THE PLEASURES OF RELIGION.

(Addressed particularly to youth.)

Prov. iii. 17. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

It is a maxim admitted by all the world, that "Every one is drawn by pleasure." But it is the misery of our fallen nature, that we are not drawn so much by the *best* pleasures, as by the *worst*; that the pleasures we generally prefer end in pain; and that the pleasures we commonly neglect are such as would make us happy for ever.—These are the pleasures of religion, called in our text, *the ways of wisdom*; by which we may understand the ways prescribed to us by Christ, who is WISDOM itself, and the pursuit of which is the true wisdom of man; for "the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding."

All men seek happiness; but few know where to find it. They may be compared to a number of seamen, sailing from different ports, in quest of a very rich and beautiful country, which they have heard much of, but never saw; and the greater part of whom set out without a map or a compass: Is it any wonder if few of them ever reach the desired spot? Just so it is with young persons who are eagerly desirous of pleasure; they are willing to take any pains, or run any risk for it; but they never seriously inquire what is true happiness; and how may we certainly acquire it. Now, if we will take Jesus Christ for our counsellor, and "none teacheth like him," he will assure us that "his ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace." Satan indeed says, that the ways of *sin* are pleasantness: so he told Eve. She believed him; and you know the consequence. Satan also says, that the ways of religion are painful and irksome. But whom will you believe? the God of truth, or "the father of lies;" he that "cannot lie," "or he that deceiveth the whole world?" God's testimony is true; and it is confirmed by ten thousand witnesses. All the good men that ever lived will bear witness to the pleasures of religion; yea, the death-beds of wicked men are constrained to confess the same.

Let us now consider, what the pleasures of religion are; and we may rank them under the following heads;

1. *The possession of Christian graces.*
2. *The enjoyment of Christian privileges;* and
3. *The performance of Christian duties.*

1. The possession of *Christian graces* is a source of pleasure.

The great thing which distinguishes a real Christian from another man is, his having the Spirit. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;" and whoever has the Spirit, has the seal of God, and the earnest of heaven. "The water that I shall give him," said Christ, when speaking of the Spirit, "shall be in him, a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." Now, the Spirit of God is the author of a new and divine life in the soul of a believer. He is born of God. He is a new creature. Every grace is implanted in the soul; the exercise of which is natural, and pleasant to the new nature as the due exercise of our senses unto the natural man.

Knowledge; the knowledge of God in Christ is pleasant. It is to the soul, what the light of the sun is to the body. "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun." St. Paul, who was blessed with this knowledge, "counted all things but loss for the excellency of it;" and was so delighted with it, that "he determined to know nothing else."

Faith is a present grace. It gives subsistence to things unseen. It realizes the world to come. It beholds Jesus, though invisible to the carnal eye. It sees him on the cross, and on the throne; and seeing him, it "rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory." This is the grace that "receives the promises;" the "exceeding great and precious promises," and derives infinite sweetness and satisfaction from them.

Repentance has its pleasures too—our Lord himself being judge. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." If there be any thing in religion that seems unpleasant, it is this; and yet there is more satisfaction in the tears that are shed for our sins, than there was pleasure in the commission of them. Besides, "he that sows in tears shall reap in joy;" and it is far better to smart for sin on earth, than to burn for it in hell.

Hope is certainly a pleasant grace. Hope is the cordial of life. The believer's hope is well founded. It is "a good hope, through grace!" not the hope of the hypocrite, which is a flash of light, followed by the blackness of eternal darkness. It is "a lively hope," that shall never make ashamed, for it is founded on Jesus, the Rock of ages.

Love is undoubtedly pleasant—the love of God. God reconciled in Christ, is the

proper object of the creature's love. All the misery that mortals ever knew is in consequence of forsaking God, and transferring their love to sin; nor can true happiness ever be known, till the soul returns to God. The love of our neighbor, too, affords unspeakable pleasure. There is no luxury upon earth equal to that of doing good. It resembles the happiness of God himself.

2. The enjoyment of *Christian privileges* is another spring of religious pleasure.

It is the Christian's privilege to have *peace with God*, through faith in the blood of Christ. Whoever, under a sense of his sin and misery, flies to the refuge of the Savior's arm, is gladly received, and freely pardoned. In the fountain of his blood, he is washed from all sin. In the righteousness of Jesus, he is justified from all accusations. He is no longer in a state of condemnation; he "has passed from death unto life." And what condition can equal this? If a number of prisoners were in jail under sentence of death, and one was brought out by the governor's pardon, who would be thought happy? the pardoned man, though clothed with rags, or the criminals within, though clothed with purple, and faring sumptuously every day? The pardoned man, however poor, would be reckoned far happier than the condemned malefactors, however rich. And so in this case—"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered." A sense of this in the conscience is the greatest happiness upon earth; it is "the peace that passeth all understanding." And it is sad to think that the greater part of mankind live without this; and are deluding themselves with a *false* peace—for "there is no peace to the wicked," or none but the devil's peace. O, how can wicked men enjoy themselves at all? If their eyes were open, they would be like *Belshazzar* at his impious feast: the hand-writing upon the wall spoiled all his mirth. So would it be with the ungodly man at the play-house, the card-table, the ale-house, or the dancing-room: he would see *Sin*, *Wrath*, *Death*, *Judgment*, and *Hell*, written, as it were, in flaming letters on the wall; he would tremble with fear, and take no rest, till he obtained the blessed privilege, "peace with God," by the blood of Christ.

Their holy calm sometimes swells into sacred *Joy*, yea, "Joy unspeakable and full of glory:" for the kingdom of God is not only "righteousness and peace, but *joy* in the Holy Ghost." What joy results

to a believer from the consideration of the hell he has escaped, the pardon he has obtained, the grace he has received, and the glory which awaits him! Every thing that can contribute to human joy, and ten thousand times more, unite to make him a happy man. The contemplation of Christ alone is enough. What wonders of grace and glory meet in him! All that is great, noble, amiable, heavenly, is seen in Jesus. All power, wisdom, patience, grace, mercy, love, and faithfulness, are combined in him. "He is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." And when the believer can add, "This is *my* beloved, and this *my* friend!" his joy is full. And well may that object create bliss in the heart, which is the heaven of heaven above; for we have no higher ideas of celestial felicity, than that it consists in "being with Christ, and beholding his glory."

What a privilege is *Adoption* into the family of God! "To as many as have received Christ, he hath given power to become the sons of God." And O, "what manner of love is this!" Pardoned rebels taken into the house of God, into the arms of God, yea, into the heart of God! "I will be a *FATHER* unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." And this is not a formal title, or an empty name, like many of those nominal honors which distinguish the sons of men: No. It is connected with freedom of access into a father's presence; holy boldness and familiarity as with a parent; a constant share of his tender love, gracious communications, and providential bounty. He who created and governs the world, bids us "cast all our care upon him," unbosom all our sorrows, and commit all our concerns for time and eternity to his management, for he "careth for us." He promises never to forget us; to withhold no good thing from us; and to make all things work together for our good.

These are some of the believer's privileges in *life*. But religion never shows its real value more than in a *dying hour*. And then nothing else avails. Wicked men, who have despised it all their lives, are forced, at last, to have recourse to its *form*; and in general, they who have lived without its power, are contented and *cheated* with its forms when they die. They bear, however, a strong testimony to the excellency of religion; for, commonly, "Men may live fools, but fools they cannot die." Like wretched Balaam, they wish "to die the death of the righteous;" but most men die as they live. Yet divine

grace has wrought miracles of mercy at the eleventh hour.

But, O, the privilege of dying in the Lord. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." Mark the end of the Christian; it is peace. The God whom he has feared; and loved, and served, will not forsake him now. The Savior who died for him will support him in dying. Death has lost its sting; and blessed is the death of him that has an interest in the death of Christ.

Our limits oblige us very briefly to turn over the Christian's privileges; let us open another source of his pleasures, namely,

3. The performance of *Christian duties*. Of these, *Prayer* is the first and chief. "Behold he prayeth!" was the first mark of Paul's conversion. And this is so pleasant to the Christian, that he cannot live without it. As well might a man live without breathing, as a Christian without praying. He esteems it a blessed privilege to "call upon the Lord in the day of trouble," and to be graciously heard and delivered. He loves the Lord, who hears the voice of his supplication, and determines to call upon him as long as he lives. The duty of *Praise* is also very pleasant. It is not only a comely but a *pleasant* thing to be thankful. "Is any man merry," saith St. James, "let him sing Psalms." Singing the praise of God with the heart is a delightful service, akin to the joys of heaven. *Reading and hearing the word of God* is also exceedingly pleasant. As new-born babes desire the breast, so new-born souls desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby. "The law of thy mouth," saith David, "is better to me than thousands of gold and silver. How sweet are thy words to my taste, yea, sweeter than honey to my palate! They are more to me than my necessary food." Yes, whoever is born of God, loves the word; and whoever dislikes it, cavils at it, neglects it, has a sure evidence of being in a carnal state. *The Lord's day*, and the public ordinances of God's house, are very pleasant to a believer. From his very soul, he calls the Sabbath "a delight, holy of the Lord, and honorable;" he esteems a "day in his courts as better than a thousand;" he is "glad, when it is said, Let us go up to the house of the Lord, and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths." O, if poor carnal sinners knew the pleasures of the godly in the worship of their Lord, they would be ashamed of their poor, mean, idle, worldly amusements, and gladly forsake them for

the more solid, refined, and heavenly joys of the children of God. These are but a small part of the Christian's pleasures. We might add, his sacred joy at the table of the Lord; his sweet meditations on divine subjects; his profitable conversations with fellow Christians; the supports he finds under afflictions; and the prospects he enjoys of eternal felicity.

And as all these are good and pleasant *in themselves*, so they appear to greater advantage, if you *compare* them with the pleasures of the world. They are certainly far more *solid* and *satisfying*; far more *rational* and *noble*; and above all, far more *durable*. "The most innocent of our carnal pleasures, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, and the like, are the badges of our weakness, and a sort of reproach upon our nature; and it is our inclination to them, rather than any excellence in them, that makes them alluring." They are needful, it is true, at present; but when our nature shall be glorified, we shall be "as the angels," and require none of these things. And when a man places his happiness in sensual pleasures, and carries them to excess in gluttony, drunkenness, uncleanness, and so on, he becomes a brute rather than a man, and the Scripture pronounces him, *dead while he liveth*. "The good man is satisfied from himself;" he has an inward source of joy; but the carnal man, who roves abroad for happiness, is never satisfied. "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing." The best of his pleasures perish in his using. Solomon says, "As the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool"—a noisy blaze, and soon over. Let a wise man listen to the impertinent, vain, foolish, proud, profane conversation of a set of gay and loose people in a tavern: what a mass of nonsense and wickedness does it appear! and could it be written down, and shown to the company themselves, surely, they would be ashamed of it! How childish are the amusements of the card-table! How strange, that a number of rational and immortal beings should spend hours upon hours in playing with bits of painted paper! How ridiculous for a company of grown people to be jumping and running about a room in their dancing assemblies! How foolish for thousands of men and women to trail many miles to a race-ground, just to see one horse's head before another! Not to mention other pleasures of the world, which are as *criminal* as they are *mean*, which will by no means bear reflection, but fill the mind with painful remorse. Ah! what

real pleasure can that man enjoy, who is forced to look back on the past with regret, and the present with confusion, and the future with dread and dismay. The carnal pleasure-taker is a hypocrite in his mirth. "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful; and the end of that mirth is heaviness." It is recorded in the life of Colonel Gardiner, that before his conversion, when he gave a loose to all his carnal passions, and lived in many guilty pleasures, when he was thought by his companions so happy, that they called him the *happy rake*; he was even then so miserable, at times, through the stings of his conscience, that he has envied a dog that came into the room, wishing rather to have been that dog, than a man, who "must give an account of himself to God." This is just what wise and holy Job long ago observed—"Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth; though he hide it under his tongue; though he spare it, and forsake it not, but keep it still within his mouth; yet his meat in his bowels is turned; it is the gall of asps within him." How just is the comparison! Sin is the *food* of a carnal man; it is his meat and drink, to do the will of his father which is in hell. This food is very sweet to him, sweeter than honey, and the honey-comb; so sweet that he is unwilling to lose the relish of it, but tries to enjoy it, as long as possible. But what is the consequence? Is this sweet food wholesome? No. It is turned in his bowels to *poison*. It is the *gall of asps* within him. The bite of an asp was deadly. There was no remedy for it: it killed in four hours, and yet it killed with little pain. Thus Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, destroyed herself. Just so the sinner dies; he may be stupified, and feel no terrors in his soul; but the bitterness that flows from sin is the bitterness of everlasting death.

APPLICATION.

WE have now taken a view of the pleasures of religion, in the possession of Christian graces, the enjoyment of Christian privileges, and the performance of Christian duties. And now, dear young people, are you not almost persuaded to be Christians? May God persuade you altogether! If you doubt the truth of what we have asserted, we appeal to Christ himself. Hear him. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your soul; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Do you love pleasure? I know you do. Seek it then in Christ's way, and not in the ways of sin. There is nothing in re-

ligion that is really irksome and unpleasant. Even that which seems to be so, as repentance, self-denial, and the mortification of sin, is rendered easy by the grace of God. And were it not so, what are the pains of a moment to the pains of eternity?

"Who would not give a trifle to prevent
What he would give a thousand worlds to cure?"

But the fact is, there is far more pleasure in religion now, than there is in sin; and we are sure that it will *end* better. What will it avail any of you a hundred years hence, that you were gay and merry, that you saw every fine sight, and indulged every sensual pleasure? but it will avail you a thousand years hence, that you regard the one thing needful, and "choose the good part." And let it be observed, that the person who can take no pleasure in religion, is not at all qualified for the joys of heaven, nor could he be happy there if he were admitted. If you can take no pleasure in the things of God, in singing his praises, in conversing with his people, in observing the Sabbath, what would you do in heaven, where the delights are not carnal, such as you love, but wholly spiritual, such as you hate? Does not this convince you that something is wrong? that your state and disposition is not what it should be? "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." It is regeneration that makes the important change in a person's views and taste, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and therefore can relish only carnal things; but "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit," and therefore enjoys spiritual pleasures. O look up to God in earnest prayer, that you may experience this blessed change. Then will sin be the object of your hatred, and holiness that of your delight. Depend upon it, you will be no loser by religion. "Godliness is profitable to all things, having the promises of this life, and of that to come." What can you wish for more? While your eternal happiness is secured, you will enjoy "a conscience void of offence towards God and man." Your way may be directed, your crosses sanctified, and your earthly comforts doubled. "O taste and see that the Lord is good."

PRAYER.—O God of all comfort, thou hast in rich mercy provided for the peace and pleasure of thy sinful creatures, even in the present evil world. Man is, indeed, born to trouble, because born in sin; and while he lives in sin he can find no true happiness. We lament our folly in having ever sought for pleasure in the ways of iniquity; but now, holy Father, we desire to turn

from our sins unto thee, being fully convinced that the ways of Wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and that all her paths are peace. O let us henceforth seek and find our happiness in the possession of Christian graces, in the enjoyment of Christian privileges, and in the performance of Christian duties. O persuade the young that Christ's yoke is easy, that his burden is light, and that his commandments are not grievous; and may we know by experience that peace which passeth all understanding, and that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory, abounding in hope through the Holy Ghost; who, with the Father and the Son, is one God over all, blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON XXVI.

THE VALUE OF THE SOUL.

Matt. xvi. 26. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

IN all the Bible, I know not a more weighty sentence than this. Were it duly considered, what a religious world would this become! The disregard of it makes the world that scene of mischief and folly which you behold. To give these words their full force, remember whose they are. They are the words of Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, the Creator of the world. And who so able to determine that the soul is worth more than the world, as he who made them both? He made the soul, and he made the world; yea, the price he paid for the redemption of the soul was his own precious blood. Surely then he knew the value of the soul. Regard these words, my friends, as full of truth, and truth of the greatest importance to yourselves. And O that he who first spake them to his disciples, may now speak them to our hearts by his Holy Spirit!

In the text there are three things which require our attention:

I. Every man has a soul of the greatest value.

II. There is a possibility of a man's losing his soul, yea, great danger of it.

III. The whole world can make no amends for the loss of the soul.

I. Every man has a soul of the greatest value.

The nature of the human soul is, at present, but imperfectly known. God has not told us so much about it, as to gratify our curiosity; but enough to assist our faith. From the Scriptures alone we learn any thing satisfactory concerning our souls; and there we find that the soul is a something distinct from the body; a thinking immortal substance; and capable of living

separately from the body in another world. This appears from Matt. x. 28, where our Lord says to his disciples—"Fear not them which kill the body; but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him, which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." In like manner, we learn from the parable of Dives and Lazarus, that the soul of the former was tormented in hell, while his body lay buried in earth. Jesus Christ assured the penitent thief on the cross, that he should be with him that very day in paradise, while, as we know, the body of Jesus was laid in the tomb. It is said of Judas, *that he went to his own place*, which certainly was hell; but his wretched carcass was on earth. St. Paul declared, that death would be *gain* to him, because, when *absent from the body*, he should be *present with the Lord*; useful as he was in the church, and happy in that usefulness, he rather desired to die, to depart, *to be with Christ*, which was far better.

Now this immortal soul is of immense value: and its excellency may be argued from the following considerations:

1. Its *origin*; it came immediately from God. Something peculiar is said of the formation of man, Gen. i. 26. "God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness." Surely it was the soul of men, rather than his earthly body, that bore the divine resemblance.

2. Consider again the vast and noble *powers* of the soul. When these powers are assisted by learning, how does the philosopher survey, measure, and describe the heavenly bodies, or search into the hidden secrets of nature! And in an ordinary way, how skilfully does the mechanic form various instruments and engines for the common purposes of life! The farmer cultivates and improves the earth, and produces from it the foodful grain. Artificers of various names furnish us with useful and ornamental articles of clothes and furniture: while the scholar, like the industrious bee, collects the wisdom of all countries and ages. And what is far better, the soul is capable, by divine grace, of knowing God, by being renewed in his holy image, of paying him cheerful service, and of enjoying him for ever in a better world.

2. Once more, consider the worth of the soul in the amazing *price* paid down for its *redemption*. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver or gold; but with the precious blood of Christ, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. Thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil, would not have sufficed: no-

thing but the blood of the Lamb of God could atone for sin.

"The ransom was paid down: the fund of heav'n,

Heaven's inexhaustible, exhausted fund,
Amazing, and amaz'd, poured forth the price,
All price beyond!"—

Surely the ransom price of the soul bespeaks its infinite value. O! let us learn to value our souls!

4. Consider again, the *contention of heaven and hell* for the soul of man. Heaven from above invites us to come to God. Jesus Christ came down on purpose to show us the way; yea, to be himself the way. The ministers of the gospel "watch for souls;" for this they study and pray, and travel and labor, that they may snatch perishing souls from the devouring flames. They are "instant in season and out of season," and are "all things to all men," that they may win some. Your serious relations, friends, and neighbors, long for your conversion; for this purpose they pray for you, speak to you, and lend you books. Yea, the angels of God are waiting around us, longing to be the messengers of good news to heaven, that sinners are repenting on earth.

On the other hand, it is the business of the devil to tempt and destroy the souls of men. As a subtle serpent he lies in wait to deceive, or as a roaring lion he roams about to destroy. Gladly would he seduce you into sin by the love of pleasure, or get you to neglect salvation by the love of business, or prejudice your minds against the Gospel of life. What is the reason that preaching the Gospel is so much opposed; and storms of persecution raised against it? Satan is afraid of losing his prey. He knows that "the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation;" he would, therefore, keep men from hearing it, lest any should be "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of the devil to God." Learn then the worth of your souls, from the strife there is between heaven and hell to obtain them; and say, whether you would wish to gladden angels or gratify devils?

5. Above all, consider the immense value of the soul, in that vast *eternity* of bliss or woe that awaits it. We are but in an embryo state at present, like a bird in the egg, or an infant in the womb. We shall soon die into eternity. We shall soon begin a state of being that will never end. The present life is merely the seed-time of eternity, and "what a man soweth that also shall he reap; he that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity"—he shall meet

with nothing but disappointment. "He that soweth to the flesh shall reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit shall reap life everlasting." Gal. vi. 20. Considering the endless duration of a soul, the happiness or misery of one saved or damned sinner will be far greater than the temporal happiness or misery of all the inhabitants of the earth for a hundred years. Eternity stamps infinite value on the soul; and this is the reason of the comparison made in our text between one single soul and the whole world, and of the question proposed in it, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" The expression seems to allude to the customs of those countries, which do not use money in their traffic, but exchange one article for another: now, what can be exchanged for the soul?—Can any thing be offered of equal value? Certainly not, for every thing in this world is temporal, but the soul of man is eternal. How dreadful then its loss! And this leads us to show,

II. That a man may lose his soul, and that he is in danger of so doing.

The soul of man cannot be lost by *ceasing to be*: for, being immortal in its nature, that is impossible. And O how gladly would a damned soul cease to be, if it were possible! But for a soul to be lost is, for it to be lost to that happiness, here and hereafter, which is suited to its nature. It is to lose all the present pleasures of religion, "the consolation that is in Christ," "the comfort of love," the "peace that passeth all understanding," and "the joy of the Holy Ghost, which is unspeakable and full of glory." Whatever Satan and wicked men affirm, we know assuredly that the truly religious man is the only happy man; and therefore, he who lives without religion, lives without the true happiness of life; and though he may pretend to defy the danger that awaits him, yet conscience will sometimes speak, and in the midst of his sinful mirth, will whisper in his ear, "What will all this profit, if thy soul be lost at last?"

But, O, who can tell the fearful import of that word *lost*, as it respects the future and eternal world! The following is related of a boy, who was sent upon some errand on a cold winter's evening, was overtaken by a dreadful storm, when the snow fell so thick, and drifted in such a manner, that he missed his way; and, continuing several hours in that condition, was ready to perish. About midnight, a gentleman in the neighborhood thought he heard a sound, but could not distinguish what it was, till, opening his window, he

heard a human voice; at a great distance, pronouncing in a piteous tone—*Lost! lost! lost!* The poor boy, in some hope of help, kept crying out at intervals, *lost! lost! lost!* Humanity led the gentleman to send persons diligently to seek for the lad, who was at length found and preserved. Happy for him that he perceived his danger, that he cried for help, and that his cry was heard! So will it be happy for us, if, sensible of the value of our souls, and their danger of perishing in hell, we now cry for mercy and help to that dear and gracious “friend of sinners,” that great and generous deliverer, who “came to seek and to save that which was *lost*.”—But if this be neglected, the soul will be lost indeed, lost without remedy, lost for ever. He who is now a *Savior*, but will shortly be a *Judge*, has marked out the characters of the wicked, and has said—“These shall go into everlasting punishment.” Awful words, *Everlasting punishment!* He will say to them, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” In the fearful expectation of this, a gentleman of considerable standing in the political and literary world, but who had neglected his soul and religion, kept crying out on his dying bed, “Lost, lost, my soul is lost for ever!”

Now, would we escape this dreadful end? Let us, then, seriously consider the danger of losing our souls. That there is danger of doing so, the word of God abundantly declares. Remember what Christ himself said, “Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat.” Is there no danger then? Mark again what is said by the Psalmist. “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.” The word of God describes the very people. See a list of them in 1 Cor. vi. 9, and mark, whether any of you are there described. “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? be not deceived; neither fornicators—nor adulterers—nor effeminate;” that is, persons of lascivious tempers and practices, however private and alone—“nor sodomites—nor thieves—nor covetous—nor drunkards—nor revilers—nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” Look over this black catalogue again, and if you find your name there, own it. Blush and tremble to think what must it be to be shut out from the kingdom of God, and so lose your own soul; and then say, is it worth while to lose your soul for any of these sinful pleasures and

practices? will you, with your eyes open, exchange your soul for any of these things?

I find, again, that all *impenitent* persons—all *unconverted* persons—all *unregenerate* persons, and all *neglecters of the Gospel*, will lose their own souls; and that you may be sure of this, I will mention the chapter and verse where it is so declared. All *impenitent* people, Luke xiii. 3. “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”—All *unconverted* people, Matt. xviii. 3. “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.”—All *unregenerate* people, John iii. 3. “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” To these characters we add—All *neglecters of the Gospel*, Heb. ii. 3. “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” How can we in our conscience expect to avoid condemnation for our sins, if, through carelessness and unbelief, we despise and reject, or disregard, and do not embrace the Gospel which brings salvation to lost sinners? And again, 2 Cor. iv. 3. “If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.” The Gospel is glorious light, and leads sinners to salvation; but if it be *hid*, if it be covered and concealed from the minds of them that hear it, so that they cannot understand or receive it, because of the veil of ignorance and blindness that remains on their hearts, it is a proof of their being yet in the lost and ruined state into which they were plunged by the fall, and, if they die in that state, they will be lost for ever. The Apostle adds—“The God of this world,” that is, the devil, whom the heathens worship, and carnal men obey, he “hath blinded the eyes of unbelievers, lest the light of the glorious Gospel should enlighten them.” If people who have the Gospel are lost, it is not the fault of the Gospel, but it is owing to men’s wilful blindness, and the advantage the devil takes of it to keep them in the way to hell. *Mr. Flavell* illustrates this by the following comparison; “Let us suppose a number of blind men on an island, where there are many smooth paths, all leading to the top of a steep cliff, and these blind men going on continually, in one or other of these paths which lead to the brink of ruin, which they see not, it must needs follow, if they all move forward, the whole number will in a short time perish, the island be cleared, and its inhabitants lost in the bottom of the sea. This is the case of carnal men; they are now in this habitable globe surrounded with the vast ocean of eternity: there are many paths leading to

eternal misery, and every man turns to his own way; one to the way of drunkenness, another to the way of swearing, another to the way of lewdness, another to pride, another to covetousness, and so on. Forward they go, not once making a stand, or thinking to what end it will bring them; till, at death, *over they go*, and we hear no more of them in this world. Thus one generation of sinners follows another, and they who come after applaud the miserable wretches that went before them. So hell fills, and the world empties its inhabitants daily into it."

Thus it is plain, that the soul may be lost, and that there is great danger of it. Why else did the Son of God come down from heaven? Why has he sent his Gospel to us? Why else do the ministers of Christ cry aloud and spare not? Why else do they warn every man, and teach every man, but that they may convince sinners of their danger, and prevent them from losing their own souls? We now proceed to show, that

III. The whole world can make no amends for the loss of a soul.

"What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? It is not here supposed, that it is in the power of any man to conquer or possess the whole world. No man ever yet *saw* all the world, and life would be too short for that purpose. But it is to gain all the riches, honors, delights, and pleasures, that a man can possibly enjoy. It is to have every idea accomplished, every sense gratified. It is to have the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life indulged in the highest perfection. All that can please the palate; the luxuries of all countries collected on the table of the epicurè; all the delightful charms of music; all the elegancies and conveniences of a noble palace; all that can gratify the smell and the touch; all the pleasures of imagination, arising from grandeur, beauty, and novelty;—and, supposing all this obtained—Solomon obtained it all. And what a *poor all* it proved—"Vanity and vexation of spirit" was the total amount.

And is this the whole of that for which men risk their souls? Foolish barter! Wretched exchange! Was *Esau* wise, who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage? Was *Judas* wise, who sold his master, and his own soul too, for thirty pieces of silver? Just as wise as the worldly man, who parts with heaven for the sordid and short-lived pleasures of earth. I remember reading of a woman, whose house was on fire. She was very ac-

tive in removing her goods, but forgot her child, who was sleeping in the cradle. At length she remembered the babe, and ran with earnest desire to save it. But it is now too late. The flames forbade her entrance. Judge of her agony of mind, when she exclaimed, "O my child, my child! I have saved my goods, but lost my child!" Just so it will be with many a poor sinner, who was all his life "careful and troubled about many things," while "the one thing needful" was forgot. What will it then avail for a man to say—"I got a good place, or a good trade, but lost my soul! I got a large fortune, but lost my soul. I got many friends, but God is my enemy. I lived in pleasure, but now pain is my everlasting portion. I clothed my body gaily, but my soul is naked before God." Our Lord exposed this folly in the parable of the worldly rich man, Luke xii. 16, &c. His wealth increased abundantly. He was about to enlarge his barns. And then he promised himself a long life of idleness, luxury, and mirth. "But God said to him, Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?"

Here, for the sake of the body, the soul was forgot. While he was dreaming of years to come, death was at the door; and little did he think, "that the next hour his friends would be scrambling for his estate, the worms for his body, and devils for his soul."

APPLICATION.

Is the soul so valuable? Then do we act as if we believed it so to be? Are our chief desires and endeavors for the body, or the soul? It is true, that the business of life, and the support of the body, require our daily care and labor. But God has placed no man in such a state as to allow no time for the care of the soul. One whole day in seven is, by his authority, appointed for the care of the soul and the worship of God. Every man, however busy, finds some time for meals and rest and conversation on other days; and if the heart were set on God and heaven, as it ought to be, many a moment would be found for spiritual exercises, without hindrance to worldly business. Yea, a proper regard to true religion, and the blessing of God procured by prayer, would render worldly business more easy, and more prosperous too. But were it otherwise, remember the text, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Is it reasonable, think you, that the nobler part, the immortal soul, should have no share in your thoughts and cares and endeavors?

Shall the brutal part of man engross all his affections? If it does, the event will be fatal. "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

2. Is there danger of losing the soul? then beware; be on your guard; watch and pray, lest you should lose your souls. Remember that sin, and ignorance, and carelessness, and unbelief, will certainly ruin the soul. Though the flesh may plead for these things, and you may have the majority of the world on your side, yet God has said, "The end of these things is death."

But why should you lose your souls? Is there not a Savior, and a great one? He came from heaven on purpose to save that which was lost. Do you ask, "What shall I do to be saved? We reply with the Apostle Paul, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." There is no name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, but that of Jesus. He is the only deliverer from the wrath to come. Take care that you trust in nothing else. Make not your good works, as they are called, your dependence: Virtue and morality are excellent things, and promote the peace and welfare of society, but they are not saviors. He that trusts them leans on a broken reed, builds on the yielding sand, and will be wofully disappointed at last. By *grace* alone are sinners saved, through *faith*; and faith is the gift of God. Many, who have some concern for their souls, perish through their ignorance of Christ. They think themselves moral and devout, and doubt not that God will accept them. But this is a ruinous mistake. Such moral persons are in as much danger as the most profane. This is the fatal stumbling-block of thousands. But know this, Christ alone can save our souls. He must be your wisdom, your righteousness, your sanctification, and redemption; your all in all. Fly then to him without delay. If you would not lose your soul, call upon him to save it. This is his office: he is the SAVIOR. It is his delight: he waits to be gracious. His open arms are ready to receive the trembling sinner. Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope. Believe in him, and you are safe. You may then say, with St. Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him," namely, the immortal soul, with all its eternal concerns, *against that day*, the day of final judgment. Yea, you may say,

"Firm as the earth thy Gospel stands,
My Lord, my hope, my trust:
If I am found in Jesus' hands,
My soul can ne'er be lost."

Finally. Can the whole world make no amends for the loss of a soul? Then prize the world less, and the soul more. Learn to think of the world now as you will think of it on a dying bed. "A dying man would give all the world for his soul; when in health he does not so much as think of it. Whilst he is able, he will do nothing at all; and he would fain do all, when he is no longer able to do any thing. What strange delusion is this! will mankind never recover from it, after so many fatal examples?" Be moderate in your pursuit of the world. "Be diligent in business," but take care to be "fervent in spirit" also. Time is short: eternity is long. Live for eternity. Show your regard for your souls, by earnestness and diligence in all the means of grace. If you prize your souls, you will prize Sabbaths, and Bibles, and Sermons, and Prayers, and serious friends. *Redeem then the time.* "Hear the voice of God while it is called to-day; for this is the acceptable time; this is the day of salvation. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Were religion painful and miserable; still, as necessary to eternal happiness, it would be your wisdom to be religious; but to be religious is to be happy now and happy for ever. On the contrary the wicked man is miserable now, and will be miserable for ever. So that the choice which is proposed to every man on this subject is this: "Will you have a foretaste of heaven now, and then heaven for ever; or will you have a foretaste of hell now, and then hell for ever?" "*Will you have two hells, or two heavens?*"

PRAYER.—O THOU, who art the Father of our spirits, enable us by thy special grace deeply to consider their unspeakable value, and, above all things, to seek their eternal salvation. Suffer us not to be so foolish and brutish as to prefer the ease and gratification of our mortal bodies to the safety and everlasting happiness of our immortal souls! and as sin has endangered our souls, and made them liable to everlasting misery, may we now earnestly seek and obtain the salvation that is in Christ. As he is able to save to the uttermost all who come to thee through him, may we believe in him to the saving of our souls; and knowing whom we have believed, and being fully persuaded that he is able to keep what we have committed unto him, may we experience joy and peace; and after having served the Lord with our redeemed bodies and spirits, may both

be finally made happy and glorious in the realms of eternal felicity, through him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood,—to whom be glory in all the churches, world without end. Amen.

SERMON XXVII.

CONVICTION OF SIN.

1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25.—If all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

IN these words we have an account of the power of the Gospel in the times of the apostles. We see here what was the design and effect of the word of God in primitive times. And it should be our concern that the same Gospel may be blessed in the same manner among ourselves. In those early days there were *miraculous gifts* in the church: for instance, speaking in a language which they had never learned; and this was to enable the preachers to address themselves to the people of all nations. It was then reckoned very honorable to possess the *gift of tongues*, and some coveted it too much. St. Paul, in this chapter, shows that it was far more desirable to *prophesy* or *preach*: “Follow after love,” saith he, “and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy; for he that prophesieth, (or preacheth) speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.” And, in our text, he mentions the blessed effects of preaching, in the conversion of a person to God. He supposes a case, which no doubt often happened: A heathen, or other ignorant person, led by curiosity, happens to come into an assembly of Christians, in a house, or barn perhaps, wishing to see or hear something of this new religion; he listens to what one or other of the preachers drops, and, the Spirit of God opening his eyes, and touching his heart, he is convinced that he is a sinner, he feels himself condemned, he is surprised to find the secret thoughts of his heart laid open; and so, struck with an awe of the Divine Majesty, he earnestly implores the mercy of God, and is convinced that God is, in a special manner, present with his people.

True religion is always the same. The Gospel is always the “power of God;” and when he is pleased to own and bless the preaching or reading of it, the same blessed effects are produced. Men are fully convinced of sin, and converted to God. The Lord grant that such may be

the effect of his word among us at this time!

1. We may first observe, that *Preaching the Gospel is an ordinance of God, and constantly used in the primitive church*. Our Savior, when leaving this world, directed his disciples to “go and teach all nations;”—to “go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature;” he graciously promised to be with the preachers of it, *even to the end of the world*; and added this solemn sanction—“He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Thus it appears that believing in Christ is necessary to salvation; and preaching the Gospel is generally necessary to believing, for “how shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” Despised as preaching the Gospel was at first, and still is by many, “it hath pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” Mark. xvi. 16. Rom. x. 14. 1 Cor. i. 21. A portion of this blessing may be expected by all those who meet together, at any time or place, for reading or hearing the Scriptures, or the explanation of them, with a view to their own edification, or that of their neighbors. May we enjoy it now!

II. *Curiosity frequently led persons to the Christian assemblies*. The religion of Christ made a great stir in the world. The true knowledge of God was so lost in general, that wherever the Gospel was first preached, it excited great attention; it seemed a new religion; it brought strange things to men’s ears. Some were greatly prejudiced against it. Many false and malicious reports were spread, and when it was brought to a town, some would say—“The men that turn the world upside down are come here also.” Men who loved sin, and lived in sin, disliked the light of the Gospel, because it discovered their evil deeds. And persons long used to superstition, error, and devil worship, were unwilling to forsake their own religion, as they called it. But when they saw miracles performed before their eyes; when they saw numbers of sick people healed with a word or a touch; when they saw some of their neighbors forsake the altars of their idols, and become moral and lovely in their conduct, they were forced to stop, and consider how these things could be, and some of them would of course go and hear for themselves. Our text supposes such a thing; “If there come in

one that believeth not, or one unlearned," an unbeliever, an infidel; or an ignorant person, one unacquainted with Christ and salvation. God often overruled this kind of curiosity for good. *Zaccheus*, a rich publican, wished much to see Christ when he passed through Jericho. He only wanted to gratify his curiosity in seeing a man who was so much talked of; but Christ in mercy called and converted him. It is good to be near Christ; he often meets with those that are "in the way," and "is found by those who sought him not." And it is happy for many that they did not suffer their own prejudices, or the fear of man, to prevent their going among serious persons, to hear and judge for themselves.

III. We observe further, that *primitive preaching had a tendency to convince men of their being sinners, in a state of guilt and danger.*

It was a principal part of the work of the prophets of old, to cry aloud and testify against the sins of the people. John the Baptist preached repentance. So did our Lord himself. And he commanded that "*repentance and remission of sins* should be preached in his name among all nations"—*repentance*, in order to *remission*. As "the whole need not the physician, but the sick;" as the disease must be felt before the remedy can be desired; so must all men know the diseased and dangerous state of their souls, before they can believe in Christ "to the saving of their souls." Accordingly we find St. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, charging sin upon the people of Jerusalem; the effect of which was, "they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Thus in our text—the unbeliever, coming into the assembly, is convinced of *all*, of all the preachers; whoever preached, his doctrine had this tendency, to convince the man of sin. This is done, not merely by the power of the word, but by the power of the Holy Spirit going along with the word. This is one of the great works of the Spirit, as our Savior promised, John xvi. 8. "When he is come he shall reprove, or convince the world of sin;" it is the same word as in the text; it signifies to convince by way of argument; to stop the mouth of the guilty person, convict him by his own conscience, and leave him without excuse.

The word of God is the chief mean of convincing people of sin. Reason and conscience alone are not sufficient. It is true, that those who "have not a written

law, or the Bible, are a law unto themselves; they show the work of the law written in their hearts," and their consciences accuse them when they do evil, and excuse them when they do well; but all this is done in a weak and imperfect manner. The light of nature discovers *some* sins, but not *all*. It discovers scarcely any sins but those that hurt our neighbor. It discovers that there is a God, and that he should be worshipped, but it does not tell us how. It does not tell us half the duties we owe to God, and therefore not half the sins we commit in not performing them. The light of nature does not show us the *root* of sin, in our fallen nature. It does not show us what *hearts* we have, "deceitful and desperately wicked," as they really are. It cannot show us that a lustful glance, an angry thought, or a covetous desire, is sinful, as our Lord, in his Sermon on the Mount, declares them all to be. Besides, natural conscience is often stupid and unfaithful. When men live long in sin, the conscience becomes callous and unfeeling, "seared, as it were, with an hot iron." It is corrupt, like all the other powers of our souls, and it is too weak and feeble, without superior aid, to convince us, in a due manner, of our sinful and dangerous condition.

THE LAW OF GOD, contained in the ten commandments, is an instrument of mighty power, in the hand of the Spirit, to convince men of sin. The *words* of the law, as printed in a book, or laid up in the memory, or fixed up in a church, are not of themselves sufficient for this purpose. No, they must be spiritually understood, and applied to the heart. St. Paul himself is a notable instance: "I was alive," saith he, "without the law once, but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." He never was without *the words* of the law, he knew them from a child—but he was without the true knowledge of the law, as a *spiritual* law, requiring "truth in the inward parts," and condemning a sinful thought. It was the *tenth* commandment that opened his eyes. "I had not known sin," he saith, "except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet;" by this he saw that a *desire* might be sinful; and seeing this, he was convinced of sin. Where natural conscience *sees one* sin, the law shows a *thousand*. What natural conscience thought a *mole-hill*, the law shows to be a *mountain*. What natural conscience thought merely *not quite right*, the law shows to be a daring act of rebellion, and worthy of eternal death.

For besides being "*convinced of all*,"

our text adds, "he is *judged* of all:" he is tried, cast, and condemned. The consideration of his own sin is fixed on his mind: he cannot forget it, he cannot get rid of it. "My sin is ever before me," said the Psalmist. It is brought home to his conscience, as when Nathan said to David, "Thou art the man!" The truly convinced sinner receives "the sentence of death in himself." The law says, "the soul that sinneth shall die." * The conscience says, "I have sinned, and therefore I must die." The law says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." The conscience says, "I have not continued in all things, therefore I am cursed." It is the office of an enlightened conscience to anticipate the judgment of the great day; *Now* to inspect the books that will be opened then, and so to judge ourselves that we may not be judged; so to condemn ourselves that we may not then be condemned. Most men have such notions of the mercy of God, as to forget his justice and holiness; they fortify themselves in his mercy against his justice. But when a person is convinced of sin, he sees that God is holy and just; and he cannot but dread these terrible attributes, till he learns from the Gospel how God is at once "a just God and a Savior: just, yet the justifier of the ungodly," who believe in Jesus.

IV. Another observation we make on the text is, Preaching the word tends to disclose the secret workings of the heart, which were unobserved before. *And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest.*

Most men are so busied in worldly affairs, or stupified with worldly pleasures, that they are great strangers to themselves. They are also lulled asleep by the soft preaching of virtue and morality, and sincere obedience, which they flatter themselves they have, so that they give themselves no trouble about religion. But the faithful preaching of God's word has a tendency to rouse men from their supineness. The word of God is a mirror that does not flatter. It shows men their hearts. It does not only tell men what they *ought to be*, but shows them *what they are*. It leads them from observing the streams of their evil actions, to trace them up to the fountain; the corrupt fountain of their fallen nature. Thus when David confesses his sin of adultery, in Psalm li. he acknowledges the spring of this horrid evil. "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." So when our Lord would convince Nicodemus that

he *must* be born again, he showed him that, "what was born of the flesh, was flesh," nothing more, nothing better, nothing but corruption and defilement; as Paul confesses, "In my flesh there dwelleth no good thing;" and elsewhere, "the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither can it be." So God declared of the old world—"Every imagination of man's heart is only evil continually." Now a convinced sinner knows this, feels this; and thus "the secrets of his heart are made manifest."—"The Lord opens the root of bitterness; makes us smell the stink of sin; discovers the dunghill whence all these little serpents were bred; shows us the rotten core, as well as the worm-eaten skin; that the *nature* of the person *lies in wickedness*, as a mole in the earth, or a carcass in putrefaction, (1 John v. 19.) all under sin; no good spring in the heart: that there is a poison in the heart that taints every work of the hand, imagination, fancy, thoughts of the mind, and motions of the will. He brings a man from the chamber of outward sins to the closet of inward iniquities, till he arrives at the large room of *NATURE*; bids him see if he can find out one clean corner in the heart; and so conducts him to the *first sin* of *Adam*; makes him behold the first fountain whence all issued; and all little enough to make the proud heart stoop to God; this makes a man vile in his own eyes, so that he cannot look upon himself but with confusion and a universal blush." So speaks the excellent Mr. Charnock.

Persons who have not been used to hear the Gospel, are frequently surprised, when they sit under a powerful ministry, to hear their own case and character so exactly described. It is not uncommon for them to charge their friends with having been to the ministers beforehand, to tell them their case. But this is no new thing. The remembrance of one sin leads to the remembrance of another. Sins that have been forgotten many years, have a kind of resurrection in the mind, so that they seem to surround and terrify the soul of an awakened sinner.—Thus it was with the woman of Samaria, who was converted by our Lord at the well; having detected her in the lewd course of life which she led; and being convinced that he was a prophet, she ran to call her neighbors, saying, "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" This is the proper and powerful effect of the word of God, which carries with it a mighty and convincing argument of its truth, as being the word of him "who

searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins of the children of men." The person who thus hears the word to purpose, "knows the plague of his own heart." He boasts no more of a *good heart*. He sees it is full of sin; which he no longer delights in, nor excuses. He sees its horrid evil, described in Scripture as *dirt, dung, plague, ulcers*, and putrefying sores; and seeing this in his own heart, he lothes himself, and cries with Job, "Lord, I am vile! I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!"—And this leads us to another observation.

V. When a man is converted to God, he always begins to pray. The person in our text already convinced of sin,—“falls down on his face, and worships God.” A blind Pagan till now. If he worshipped before, it was Bacchus, or Venus perhaps: or a more heathenish Christian; one who never worships at all. For how many are there among us, who so entirely live *without God in the world*, that they never pray! But see the effect of God's word when carried to the heart. Regardless of the eye of man, he prostrates himself in the dust of abasement before his offended Maker and Judge. This was the symptom of Paul's own conversion: “Behold, he prayeth,” said Christ concerning him, as a proof that he was another man: a new man.

It is sad to think that so many people never pray. A short form of words, always the same, and always *unfelt*, is hypocritically offered by some in their beds, or when nearly asleep. By many others this paltry ceremony is quite omitted. Some are ashamed to pray, lest they should be laughed at for it. Others are afraid, lest the devil should appear to them. Others pretend they cannot get a private place to pray in. But let me ask such, Can you not get a private place to sin in? and if you loved prayer as you now love sin, you would not make this excuse. Behold, here, a man so overpowered with a sense of the majesty and justice of God, so deeply affected with his danger as a sinner, and so eagerly desirous of his pardoning mercy, that he forgets he is surrounded by mortals, and he falls down before his God with the publican's petition—“God be merciful to me a sinner!” Thus has it been with a condemned criminal at a human bar, when the fearful sentence of death has been pronounced, he has fallen down on his knees, and, regardless of the gazing throng, implored the favor of the judge. I have seen dying persons, expecting soon to appear before God, they have cried for mercy, without considering who surrounded their

beds. The place, or the posture of prayer, is of little consequence. It might disturb the public worship for persons to fall down and pray aloud in our assemblies; yet, when a person is greatly affected, it will be difficult to conceal his emotions. He will lift up his heart, if not his voice, to God. And when he goes home, it will not be with the usual compliment, that he had heard a fine sermon, or a charming preacher; but, retiring to some secret place, he will confess and lament his sins, and seek the pardon of them through the blood of Christ; while, conscious also of their lothesome defilement, he will earnestly crave the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit. One more observation remains.

VI. Converted persons drop all their prejudices against the people of God, and speak honorably of them. “He will report that God is in you of a truth.” It is not unlikely that he said before, “the devil is in you.” Profane people indulge themselves in abusing religious persons. They are fond of calling them nicknames; they treat them with contempt and scorn; and sometimes abuse their persons, injure their property, hurt their character, or hinder their employment. Though religion be protected by the laws of the land, there are a thousand ways in which serious people are now persecuted, especially where the Gospel is newly introduced into a place; and the poor, especially, are threatened by their superiors, that they shall be deprived of parish support, or other assistance, if they dare to judge for themselves, and attend the worship of God, where they think themselves profited. But these *persecutors* (for that is their true character, if they restrain men in their religion,) ought to remember, that “the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him,” Jude 15; for the Lord considers what is done to his people as done to himself; and he says, “it were better for a man to have a mill-stone hung about his neck, and be cast into the sea with it, than for him to offend or hurt one of the least of his disciples, who believe in him.” Mark. ix. 42.

But no sooner does a man come to himself, and see things as they are, than he forms a very different opinion of godly persons. They are no longer the objects of contempt and scorn. He sees that they are the excellent of the earth, the children

of God, and heirs of eternal glory. He now says; "God is in you of a truth." Blessed truth! Jesus is "Immanuel, God with us." He is really and truly with his people, when they meet to pray and praise, and hear his word. "Lo! I am with you alway," saith he, "even to the end of the world." And again, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them," Matt. xviii. 20. Blessed be Jesus for this precious promise, and blessed be his name for the fulfilment of it. We know he is with us, to observe, guide, assist, encourage, quicken, approve, and succeed us; yea, he comes first to bid us welcome.—"There am I."

Now, every converted person knows and feels this. He therefore says, with Jacob—"How awful is this place! it is the house of God and the gate of Heaven." Observe, it is said, "He will *report* that God is with you." He will not be ashamed to tell the world so: and he will tell it to others, that they may come too. Just as some of our Lord's first disciples did. When *Andrew* was called by Christ, he went and called his brother *Peter*; and when *Philip* was called, he invited *Nathaniel*; and when *Nathaniel* made some objections, and said, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Philip said, *Come and see.*" In like manner, let all those who have felt the power of God under the word, invite their friends and neighbors to hear and judge for themselves.

APPLICATION.

AND thus, my friends, we have seen a picture of primitive religion, such as prevailed in the first and best days of Christianity. And now let us inquire, Is our religion like this? Is it thus in our assemblies? Not in all. In some places what irreverence! laughing, ogling, sleeping! The preacher himself is perhaps in fault. Perhaps it is not the Gospel that he preaches; or, he is unaffected by it. He performs his duty as the school-boy his task. The people come expecting nothing; they go away having obtained nothing; and a pious spectator is constrained to reverse the text, and say, "God is *not* here, of a truth."

But where the Gospel of Jesus is faithfully preached, the powerful effects, mentioned in the text, will, by the blessing of God, more or less follow. If the doctrine tend "to humble the sinner, to exalt the Savior, and to promote holiness," Jesus, by his spirit, is there, and will set his seal to the heavenly truth. Both the law and the Gospel, rightly dispensed, will tend to

convince men of their lost and ruined state, to disclose the secret thoughts of the heart; and when this is done, to lead the sinner in earnest prayer to seek salvation by Jesus Christ. Has the word of God had this effect upon us? To know and feel ourselves miserable sinners is the first main point in religion. Without this, we are blind to every thing else in Scripture. Without this, we cannot pray sincerely, or do any thing in religion aright. Sin cannot be taken away till it be discovered; nor can we ever become what we ought to be, till we know what we are. And when this is rightly known, you see what follows. You see the convinced sinner prostrate on the ground. Has a sense of sin, an apprehension of its danger, and a hatred of its evil, brought us to our knees? If so, bless God for it. It is a good beginning. This is the finger of God. Wait upon God; and he who hath begun the good work will finish it.

What an evidence does this subject afford us of the truth and reality of the religion of Christ! Can any power but that which is divine thus enlighten the mind, convince the conscience, terrify the soul, disclose the secrets of the heart, humble the proud rebel, and at once turn his affections into another channel? No, no. This is the work of God; and the Scriptures, by which he effects it, are the word of God, and he who believeth hath hereby "a witness in himself" that they are so. May these blessed truths, so useful and necessary to the conversion and salvation of souls, be everywhere proclaimed; and may these, their blessed effects, be everywhere produced; so shall multitudes be saved, and glory, glory, glory, be given to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

PRAYER.—ALMIGHTY God! who didst speak in times past to the fathers by the prophets, who hast since spoken to mankind by thy Son, and dost now speak to us in the holy Scriptures, and by the preaching of the Gospel, grant, we beseech thee, that the Gospel may come to us, not in word only, but in power: may the Holy Spirit, according to the promise of our Savior, convince us of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

We confess, O Lord, that we are guilty before thee. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us. We stand at thy bar, O thou Judge of the earth, condemned by thy holy law, and condemned in our own consciences; but, blessed be thy name, we have an Advocate with thee, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins. Have mercy upon us, O God, for

his sake! Have mercy upon us, according to thy loving kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out our transgressions.

Glory be to thee, O Lord, that thou art still in the midst of thy church of a truth, as thou wast in former times. Thanks be unto God, that by the preaching of his Gospel, accompanied by the power of his Spirit, some who once trusted in themselves that they were righteous, have been convinced and judged, and made to cry out, What shall we do to be saved? O that such happy effects may follow the words which have now been spoken! We beg it for the sake of Jesus Christ our Advocate and Mediator.

SERMON XXVIII.

THE LAMB OF GOD BEHELD BY FAITH.

John i. 29. Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

THERE is a vast curiosity in the mind of man, and the world abounds with objects to gratify it. The heavens, the earth, the sea, are full of wonders; and had not man sinned, he might always have read the book of nature with new delight, and have seen the glory of God in every line. But now, unhappy, fallen man, turns his back upon God, while he surveys his works; and thinks every trifle better worth his notice than his Maker. In infancy, in youth, in middle life, in old age, a constant succession of vanities courts his attention, and he never thinks of beholding Christ till he die, and appear before his tribunal.

Like John the Baptist, whose words these are, I would cry loud and say to my fellow men, *Behold the Lamb of God*—“turn away your eyes from beholding vanities;” and fix your attention on an object the most wonderful, the most pleasing, and the most useful, that the eyes of men or angels ever beheld.

John was the harbinger of Christ, “the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord.” With strict austerity of manners, and with great plainness of speech, he preached—“Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” His honest labors were crowned with great success; and thousands of all descriptions flocked from the cities and towns of Judea into the solitary wilderness, and, touched with compunction for their sins, applied to him, saying—“What must we do?” O that, in this our day, we could see such an awakening!

Thus the prophet proceeded, till Jesus Christ entered on the public stage of action, and came forth from the wilderness, where he had suffered all kinds of temptation. John, far from pretending to be the Messiah, directed his disciples to Jesus,

saying, in the words of our text, *Behold the Lamb of God*.

In these words let us consider,

I. The great object presented to our view—*The Lamb of God*, and

II. The attention we ought to pay him—*Behold the Lamb!*

I. The object set before us is *Jesus Christ*, here called the Lamb of God.

No doubt the expression alludes to the sacrifices of the Jews, in which consisted a principal part of their worship, as appointed of God himself. In this way God was worshipped from the beginning of the world. We find Abel, the son of Adam, offering up lambs, “the firstlings of the flock, and of the fat thereof,” and this was a sacrifice well pleasing to God, because it was offered up in faith. He believed the promise of a Savior, which God had made to his father; he trusted in him, and was justified. It was for this purpose in the first place, and not for amusement or profit, that Abel was “a keeper of sheep;” and it was probably with the skins of lambs, killed for sacrifices by Adam and his wife, that the Lord God clothed them, instead of the covering of fig-leaves which they had made for themselves. Thus all believers in Jesus are clothed with his righteousness, while blind Pharisees vainly strive to hide the nakedness of their souls with their own “filthy rags.” Thus God continued to be worshipped by his own people for four thousand years; even till, “in the fullness of time, God sent forth his own Son,” the very person that John here points out as the Lamb of God. And it is remarkable, that almost all nations, however they differed in other notions of religion, retained something of sacrifices. The sons of Noah, wherever dispersed, carried with them this true notion, that “without shedding of blood there was no remission.” And many of them mistaking the ancient promises of the great sacrifice of the Son of God, offered up a man as an atonement for their souls. This was practised in England before the Romans conquered it; and is practised still in the newly discovered islands in the South Seas. May God hasten the time, when his glorious Gospel shall be preached in all the world, and every Pagan sinner be directed to the Lamb of God, whose “blood alone cleanseth from all sin.”

Various creatures were used in sacrifice by the law of Moses; but the principal and most constant victim was the *Lamb*. One was offered up at the temple every morning, and another every evening; and on the Sabbath-day, two in the morning,

and two in the evening. Once a year there was a remarkable ordinance—The Pass-over. It was first instituted when the children of Israel came out of Egypt. On that dreadful night when God plagued the Egyptians by slaying their first-born, he ordered his own people to kill a lamb, and to sprinkle its blood upon the door-posts of their houses; and when the destroying angel went forth in the night to slay the Egyptians, he should *pass over* the houses so distinguished, and not hurt them. Once a year, ever after, they were to observe the same ceremony; and something like it they still observe. Now we are sure, from the New Testament, that all this was done to preach Christ unto them, and especially to us. St. Paul says, 1 Cor. v. 7, *Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us.* The paschal lamb was without blemish; Christ was free from all sin, original or actual. The lamb must be of the first year: so Christ laid down his life in the prime of his days. The lamb must be so slain that his blood might copiously flow: so the Redeemer shed his blood abundantly by his agony, by the thorns, the scourge, the nails, and the spear; and yet, according to the type, not a bone of him was broken. In the temple service, the lamb was *slain before the whole of the assembly*; in like manner our Savior suffered at the great festival in view of the whole assembled nation. The blood of the lamb was sprinkled on the door-posts: the blood of Christ must be applied to the conscience, and is therefore called “the blood of sprinkling.” That blood secured every family where it was sprinkled; the destroying angel was forbidden to hurt them: so the merits of Jesus screen every believer from the stroke of offended justice, and the bitter pains of eternal death. “What,” says the pious Hervey on this passage, “What must have become of the Israelite, who, trusting to the uprightness of his heart, should neglect to make use of this *divinely appointed* safeguard? He must inevitably have perished with the death of his first-born. Equally certain, but infinitely more dreadful, will be *his condemnation*, who, before the omniscient Judge, shall presume to plead his own integrity, or confide in his repentance, and reject the atonement of the dying Jesus.”

The offering up of sacrifices was the chief part of the religion of the Old Testament church. Sacrifices were to believers then; nearly, what sacraments are to believers now. Christ the Purifier, Christ the Peace-maker, was the substance of them. The animal offered must be

clean, without spot or blemish; that it might signify the perfect purity of Christ, *as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.* The priest laid his hands upon the creature offered for an offering, while the sinner confessed his iniquity over the head of the sacrifice; and thus sin was typically transferred to the victim; which was therefore called *sin* or *guilt*. Thus God “laid upon his Son the iniquities of us all:” and he became “*sin* for us, that we might be made *righteousness* in him.” The slain sacrifices were burnt on the altar. So Christ was consumed by the flames of his love for his Father and his people, and at the same time by the flames of the divine wrath against sin, which he had undertaken to bear. There was a sweet-smelling savor of incense that ascended with the flames and smoke; and this was to signify how acceptable to God was the death of his Son, “who gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savor.” Ephes. v. 2. The *peace-offerings* were not entirely consumed, but the person who offered them might, and did eat of them. A feast was frequently made of them, which was a kind of sacrament of communion; a type of that communion which believers in Christ now have, with him and with one another, in the sacred ordinance of the Lord’s supper.

But Jesus Christ is called in our text, *the Lamb of God*. This name is given him by way of eminence, and to show his *superiority* over every other sacrifice. He is *the Lamb of God*, as he was chosen, appointed and prepared by God the Father, from all eternity. In common sacrifices every man chose his own Lamb; here God only chose and appointed. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,” that he might be the great sacrifice. His infinite superiority also appears in that he was but *once* offered. Other sacrifices were repeated annually, monthly, yea, daily; this showed their imperfection, and that they could not, by any virtue of their own, take away sin.—“But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; for by *ONE* offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified;” that is—he hath done all that was necessary for the pardon and complete acceptance with God of all those who believe in him, and who were set apart in the purpose of God for glory. Heb. x.

This is that peculiar excellence in the Lamb of God, on account of which we are invited to behold him. Behold him, sinner! for he *taketh away sin*. The words

taketh away signifies *he beareth away*. This denotes that sin is a *heavy burden*. And would to God this were seriously considered! "Fools make a mock at sin;" they make light of it; they make a jest of it; but thereby they show their folly. Let them think a moment (if minds so light can think) let them think—what it was that filled the world with "mourning, lamentation, and woe!" what produced all the sorrows and sufferings that we see, or feel, or fear? Was it not sin, accursed sin? Let them consider what a burden it is to a guilty conscience, when once its evil is discovered and its effects dreaded; for though the spirit of a man may "sustain his infirmity, a wounded spirit who can bear." The Psalmist, a type of this sin-bearing Lamb, cries out—"There is no soundness in my flesh, because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones, because of my sin; for mine iniquities are gone over mine head as an heavy burden; they are too heavy for me." Ps. xxxviii. 3, 4. Life itself is a burden to a mind oppressed with the guilt of some particular sin, or of sin in general. This led Judas to suicide, and has led many others to the same fatal end. But this is the way to increase the burden, not to lose it: for damned souls in hell must for ever lie under the intolerable weight. There *the worm dieth not*, even the worm of a corroding conscience, always stung by remorse; *and the furious fire* of divine resentment is never *quenched*.

But, blessings for ever to the dear Lamb of God! He bore our sins, and bore them away. In the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, where the sufferings of Christ are wonderfully described, it is said, Verse 6, "The Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all;" and St. Peter says, 1 Pet. ii. 24, "He himself bare our sins in his own body on the tree." As our surety he made himself answerable for our sins, so that they were imputed to him; he bore the punishment due to them, even the wrath and curse of God, which if he had not borne, must have sunk each of us into the pit of hell. And O what did Christ endure when this heavy burden was laid upon him! Hear his groans in the garden, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, or very heavy, even unto death: Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me"—let the season of my sufferings be shortened. See the bloody sweat that fell from him in the agony. This was the effect of the burden of our sins, which then were made "to meet upon him." There was a very remarkable type of this under the law, Levit. xvi. On the

great day of atonement two goats were provided. One of them was killed for a sin-offering. On the other goat "Aaron shall lay both his hands, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness; and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited, and he shall let go the goat into the wilderness." These goats signify Jesus Christ; the one signified Christ *dying*, the other Christ *living*: Christ as *dying*, satisfied for our sins; but Christ, as *living*, justifies us from them: he died for our sins, and rose again for our justification. As the living goat was to have the sins of the people laid upon him, and he was to carry them away with him into the wilderness, so God laid our iniquities on Christ, and he takes them away, as it were, into a land not inhabited, where they shall be heard of no more; and this is exactly what our text declares, and what God has elsewhere promised, "Your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more—if they be sought for they shall not be found—as far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."

Thus the *guilt* of them is for ever removed from true believers. And not only the *guilt*, when they are justified, but the *power* also of them is taken away by sanctification. He who gave his dear Son for us, gives also his Holy Spirit to us. He will not suffer sin to rule. They are united to Christ by Faith, and "sanctified by the faith that is in him." Yea, finally, he will remove sin altogether; its being as well as its effects. "The body of sin and death" shall be purified in the grave, and body and soul shall be eternally pure and happy with Jesus.

Further to recommend to our notice this Lamb of God, the wide extent of his glorious work is mentioned in our text—"he taketh away the sin of the world." By this expression we cannot understand that he takes away the guilt and power of sin from every man in the world, for if so, none would be damned. Alas! we plainly see thousands from whom neither the guilt nor the power is taken away; we see thousands unconcerned about the removal of their sins; we see thousands who think they can take away their own sins; and thousands who despise the blood of Christ, and trample it under their infidel feet. But by the "world," and "the whole world," we are to understand the whole

world of the elect; the whole world of believers; the "redeemed of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation:" all, in every place, and ye who believe in Jesus, without any distinction. And this expression was often used by our Lord and his apostles, because it was a fond notion of the Jews, that the Messiah was to come only to them; and even the believing Jews at first were offended that the Gospel was preached to the Gentiles. It is also for the encouragement of all sorts of sinners, of the chief of sinners, that this general term is used. Those who know and feel that they have a world of sin, a world of guilt, lying upon them, may here find comfort—he taketh away the sin of the world. Yea, doubtless, there was a sufficiency in the blood of Christ to take away all the sins of the world, had it been so appointed. If all the world were to have been actually saved, there would have been no other offering, no greater offering, nor any more suffering than Christ endured. But Christ had in view his *church*, his *people*, his *sheep*, all of whom shall hear his voice, believe, and be saved. Nevertheless, the universality of the phrase is a great encouragement to sinners who are seeking salvation; for no sinner in all the world, let him be who he will, or what he will, shall be excluded from the benefit of Christ's death, if he come to him by faith. "Him that cometh to me," said he, "I will in no wise cast out."

II. We are now to consider what that attention is, which we are here called upon to pay to Christ, *Behold, behold* the Lamb of God.

When John spake these words, Jesus was in sight; Jesus was coming to him. John pointed to him with his finger; but he did not mean that his disciples should only look at him with their bodily eyes, but that they should become his disciples and followers, which they did; that they should view him by *faith*, as the promised Messiah; and admire, receive, and prize him, as the Savior of the world. We cannot now see Christ with our bodily eyes, but by divine grace we may look unto him and be saved.

Our *attention* to Christ is required by the Gospel. Let us turn away our eyes from beholding worldly vanities. The eye is never satisfied without seeing them; it always craves something new. But here is the grandest object that ever eyes beheld. Do men eagerly desire to see extraordinary persons? here is the most glorious person that ever was seen. The queen of Sheba came a great way to see

Solomon; "but a greater than Solomon is here." When a king or an emperor appears in public, crowds are anxious to behold him. Here is the King of kings, the King of the World. At the assizes, every one wishes to see the judge. Here is the great *Judge* of quick and dead, from whose sacred lips each of us shall receive our sentence. Generals and admirals, who have had great success in war, are commonly objects of peculiar regard. Here is the Conqueror of the world, of sin, of hell, who led captivity captive, and bought our freedom with his blood.—Here is an Orator, whose words not only move the living, but raise the dead. Here is a Physician, who has cured millions of dying souls, and never failed in a single case. In a word, Behold your SAVIOR!

It is the look of *faith* that is chiefly intended. *Faith* in Christ is described by various names, according to the various names of Christ. When Christ is represented as a *foundation*, then faith is *resting* upon him. If he be compared to *food*, then faith is *eating* and *drinking*. When he is called a *gift*, then faith is *receiving* him. If he is a *refuge*, faith is *flying* to him. When he is represented as *calling* sinners, then faith is *hearing* him and *coming* to him: and here where Christ is represented as a glorious *object*, faith is *beholding* him.

* It is represented in the same manner by our Lord himself, John iii. 14. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." When the Jews were dying by the bite of serpents, they were cured merely by looking at the brazen serpent; so, whoever is ready to perish in his sins, let him look to Jesus, and he shall be saved.

Looking is an act of the mind: it supposes some knowledge of Christ, which is elsewhere called *seeing the Son*, and joined with *believing on him*. It supposes a conviction of the need of Christ; looking to Jesus is the act of him who wants to be saved. It supposes that the soul *despairs* of finding help from any other quarter; it is looking from every thing else in order to believe in him. It supposes a persuasion of his ability to save, to save to the uttermost; and it includes some humble degree of hope, that looking to him will not be in vain.

Those who truly behold Christ by faith, will also behold him with affection. With what eyes, think you, did they look at Christ, who had been healed and helped

by him? The sick, the blind, the lame, the dead, who had felt his miraculous power in their recovery? With eyes, melting in tears of gratitude, would they gaze on their kind benefactor, their great deliverer. O with what joy and love, should saved sinners behold the dear Redeemer! Yea, it will be the heaven of heaven thus to behold him for ever.

APPLICATION.

AND now, having considered what a great and glorious object Jesus Christ is, and what regard we ought to pay him, let us ask the question, Have we complied with this easy, pleasant, reasonable command in the text? Have we, with *attention*, with *faith*, with *affection*, beheld this dear Lamb of God? Ah, Sirs, are not some of your hearts fixed on very different objects;—your worldly gain, the gaieties of the world, the base lusts of the flesh? Are not these your favorite objects? O consider this, you that forget God. What can all these do for you? Even now they satisfy not. But what will they do for you in a dying hour? O be persuaded to look to Jesus. How else will you look death in the face? How else will you dare to look the neglected Savior in the face, when you see him on the throne of judgment? What will all the world think of you, when you shall be pointed out before them, and it shall be proclaimed—"Here is a man that never thought it worth his while to look at Jesus?" Will not all heaven say, "Let him be damned? If he even was not worth a look, let him be banished from it for ever?" O sinner, if you would have Jesus look upon you *then*, look upon him *now*; and if you know not how to do it, pray him to teach you, and ask of him "eye-salve that thou mayest see."

Are any here, who wish that their sins may be taken away? Their sins are many, and lie heavy on their consciences, and they can find no relief. "Behold the Lamb of God;" he *only* taketh away sin. Perhaps you have been looking elsewhere. You have been looking to yourself, your own goodness, your honesty, your church-goings, prayers, and sacraments. Are these Saviors?—Were these appointed of God to take away sin? They are good things in their places, but very bad things to be put in the place of Christ. Away with them all in point of dependence, and for the purpose of acceptance. With holy Paul, you must count them all loss and dung, that you may win Christ, and be found in him. Look to nothing but Jesus;

for only he taketh away the sin of the world.

And to you, believer, also, we still say, "Behold the Lamb of God." This must be your daily business as long as you live. And nothing can be so useful. Have you a hard heart? look to him, and it will melt. "They shall look upon me whom they pierced, and mourn." Are you cast down, and full of fears?—"They looked to him and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed." Say with Jonah in the whale's belly, "I will look again." Would you obtain genuine humility? A sight of Christ must effect it. Job and Isaiah got it by a view of the glory of Christ. Would you entertain a constant hatred of sin? Behold the Lamb of God, bleeding for it on the cross. Would you be truly holy? Behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus, and you shall be transformed into the same image from glory to glory. Would you be bold for God, and constant in his cause? Behold the patient Lamb of God, who has left us an example that we should walk in his steps. Thus, Christians, persist in looking to Jesus daily by faith, till death shall shift the scene, and change faith into sight. Then shall you see him as he is; no longer "through a glass darkly, but face to face;" nor shall you evermore need the exhortation in the text,—"Behold the Lamb of God."

PRAYER.—FATHER of mercies, we thank thee that we have heard the joyful sound! truly, these words are glad tidings of great joy; for we have sinned, and come short of thy glory. When we consider our guilt and pollution, and remember that thou art holy and just, we are ready to ask, Wherewith shall we come before the Lord, and bow before the Most High God? what offering can we bring, and what sacrifice can we make, to atone for our unnumbered transgressions? But thanks be unto God, who has found a ransom! Thou, O Lord, hast thyself provided a Lamb for the burnt-offering,—the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. We desire to lay our hands upon the head of this sacrifice, and to make it our own. We desire, with gratitude and joy, to accept of the offered grace. We pray that the blood of Jesus Christ thy Son may cleanse us from all sin.

Be pleased, O Lord, so to bless the discourse now delivered, that some who have hitherto been looking only at the vanities of this world, may henceforward with attention, with faith, and with affection, behold the Lamb of God! And may they who have already beheld this glorious object, be excited, by what they have heard, to look with closer attention, with stronger faith, and with more ardent love than ever before. Thus may we learn to hate sin, to be patient in suffering, and bold in the cause of truth and righteousness.

Help us all from the heart to join in the cho-

rus of Heaven, and say, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever:

SERMON XXIX.

THE CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL.

Acts ix. 11.—Behold, he prayeth!

THE grace of God was never more gloriously displayed, than in the conversion of St. Paul. Speaking of it himself, he says, "The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant;" and, "In me, Jesus Christ showed forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." The change that was wrought in him was so sudden and remarkable, that the disciples of Christ at Damascus were afraid it was not real. To remove their suspicions, our Lord assures Ananias, their minister, that he was certainly a changed man; *for, behold he prayeth!* As if he had said, "You need not be afraid of him now. He was a bad man, but now he is a new man. He breathed out threatenings and slaughter, but now he breatheth out prayers and supplications. *Behold he prayeth!*"

As Paul's praying is here mentioned by Jesus Christ as a proof of his Conversion, we shall take occasion from these words to show, that

A praying person is a gracious person.

This important truth will appear with the stronger evidence, by considering the history of Paul's conversion, as recorded in this chapter.

Paul was the son of Jewish parents; but being born in the city of Tarsus, was entitled to the privileges of a Roman citizen. He was brought up to the business of a tentmaker: for it was the laudable custom of the Jews, however rich, to teach their children some trade. He had, however, a good education, and was sent to Jerusalem, where he studied the Jewish religion under the care of Gamaliel, a learned doctor of the law. He also joined the sect of the Pharisees, who were in great esteem at that time for their apparent piety and zeal. But he unhappily imbibed their self-righteous notions, their bigotry, and their bitter hatred of Jesus Christ and his followers. Paul, probably, had opportunity to hear the discourses and see the miracles of Jesus, but they made no saving im-

pressions on his mind; on the contrary, he became the implacable enemy of his followers. With all his profession of religion, he was a proud man, depending on his own goodness for salvation, and therefore not at all disposed to relish the humbling, self-denying religion of Christ, nor to join himself with the despised Nazarenes. Yea, such were his prejudices, that he became "a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious."

The first we read of him in the book of the Acts is, that he assisted at the cruel murder of Stephen, the first Christian martyr; for he took care of the clothes of those who stoned him, and thereby showed his approbation of the bloody deed. After this, he was active in the persecution. He made "havoc in the church, entering into every house, and dragging away women as well as men, committed them to jail," that they might be put to death. He "imprisoned, beat, and punished," all the believers he could find in any of the synagogues; and, "being exceedingly mad" against the Christians, he obliged many of them to take refuge from his fury, by flying to distant places. Not content with this, he applied to the high-priest for authority to extend his persecution to the city of Damascus, which was one hundred and sixty miles off. On this cruel expedition he set out, "breathing threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord."

Who would have ever thought that this man should become a Christian, a preacher, an apostle, a martyr? Was there any thing in him that could entitle him to the favor of God? Some have supposed so, in order to lessen the free, sovereign grace of God in his conversion. They tell us he was sincere in his way, had "virtuous habits," and therefore had a previous disposition to receive the Gospel. Nothing can be more false. He tells us himself he was "the chief of sinners;" he was "in the flesh." "he went about to establish his own righteousness, not submitting himself to the righteousness of God." Surely here was nothing to recommend him to mercy: but every thing that might provoke the Almighty to destroy him for ever. But "God's ways are not as man's ways, nor his thoughts as man's thoughts." Paul "was a vessel of mercy," "separated from his mother's womb;" in the counsels of God; but the call was deferred till a time, when the freeness, power, and riches of grace might appear with the brightest lustre.

Paul was now within sight of Damas-

cus, enjoying the thoughts of his expected success; when, suddenly, in a moment, there appeared a light in the firmament, a dazzling brightness, far above that of the sun, which was then shining in its meridian splendor. It was not a flash of lightning, but a continued glory, composed of rays which darted from the body of our Savior; who condescended personally to appear for the calling of this atrocious sinner. At the sight of this prodigious splendor, Paul, and all his companions, "fell to the earth," dazzled and confounded. While prostrate on the ground, a voice full of awful majesty pronounced these words—*Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?* It was Jesus who spake; but Paul knew him not; yet supposing him to be some divine personage, he summoned up sufficient courage to say, "Who art thou, Lord?" And he immediately replied with a solemnity and endearment peculiar to himself, and which pierced the rebel's heart—"I am Jesus, the Nazarene, whom thou persecutest; It is hard for thee to kick against the goads."

Observe here that Jesus Christ accounts *himself* persecuted, when his poor members are persecuted. Paul thought he was punishing only a despicable set of silly enthusiasts, who had forsaken the church, and espoused the cause of the crucified Jesus; for Christ takes up the cause, and lets him know, that he thought *himself* injured by the injuries done to his followers. Let this be a check to those thoughtless persons, who disturb and oppose religious people in their devotions. You may be as much mistaken as Paul was; for aught you know, the people you despise may be dear to God. If their religion be wrong, it is none of your business to punish them for it. Leave that to God.

You are not their judge. But if their religion be right, what then are you doing? You are *fighting against God*, and in so doing you are hurting yourself. For so our Lord adds, respecting Saul; "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks or goads;" alluding to oxen urged on to labor by pricking them with goads; if, instead of quickening their pace, they kick against the instruments that wounded them, they only hurt themselves the more. Just so it is with wicked persecutors: their rage is impotent as it is foolish; they cannot hinder the designs of God, but they may and will hurt their own souls.

The Savior asks him *WHY?*—*why persecutest thou me?* Could Saul give any good answer to this question? Can any persecutor give a good answer to it? And

what answer wilt thou give, O wretched man, to this question, when the glorious Jesus shall put it to thee at the judgment-day? Sinner, why didst thou disturb, abuse, and injure my zealous followers upon earth?" Alas! thou wilt be speechless. Ask thyself the question *now*, and thou wilt persecute no more.

How astonished must Saul be to find that it was Jesus who now spake to him from the heavenly glory! "I am Jesus, the Nazarene"—he who was despised and rejected of men; he who was treated as a vile impostor, and put to a cruel and shameful death. How must he be surprised to find that Jesus was still alive, that the account of his resurrection was actually true: consequently, that he was really the Messiah, the king of the Jews, and the Savior of the world! And observe that Christ owns the name of scorn by which he was distinguished—the *Nazarene*. It was a name of contempt and reproach, and on that account affixed to the cross. But Jesus, in all his celestial glory, owns the name. *I am Jesus, the Nazarene*. Let this teach us to take up the cross, and cheerfully bear a *nickname* for his sake; yea, let us rejoice and be exceeding glad that we are "counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."

What could Paul now expect? Convinced of his enormous guilt, what could he expect but sudden "destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power?" But the Lord had designs of mercy towards him, and towards thousands by him. The power of the Spirit of God accompanied this vision and these words, or he would have only been affrighted, not converted. We do not find that the soldiers who were with him were changed, though, no doubt, they were alarmed. If God were to speak to men in thunder and lightning and earthquake, by voices from heaven, or visions from the dead, this would not change the heart. No. Nothing but grace will do this. But the heart of Saul was now subdued, and he discovers this by the first word he utters—"Trembling, and astonished, he said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Thus resigning himself into the hands of Jesus, he obtained forgiveness. He is then directed to go into Damascus, when he should receive further instruction. Then he arose from the earth, and was led by the hand, for he had lost his sight, into the city; where he continued blind for three days, and did neither eat nor drink; spending, probably, the whole time in serious meditation and fervent prayer.

At the end of three days, the Lord, pitying the sorrows of this afflicted man, appeared to a disciple in the city, named Ananias, and directed him to go into *Straight Street*, and inquire at the house of a person named *Judas* for one called *Saul of Tarsus*, adding the words of our text—*Behold he prayeth!* Ananias was still afraid to go; and therefore said, “Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem; and here he hath authority from the chief priests, to bind all that call on thy name.” But the objection was overruled. Ananias went. By this means Saul was instantly delivered from his blindness, filled with the Holy Ghost, was baptized, and having received meat, was strengthened. Afterwards, as we all know, “he preached the faith which he once destroyed,” and was for many years a most eminent and useful Apostle of Christ, in speaking the knowledge of the Gospel among many nations.

The conversion of Saul, afterwards called Paul, has been justly considered as affording a very strong argument for the truth of the Christian religion. And it is worth our while briefly to consider it in that view. If we believe what St. Paul tells us of his own conversion, we must of course believe all that the Bible says; for his doctrines perfectly agree with the rest of the Scriptures; and he declares that he received his doctrines, not from men, but from God. And we certainly have reason to believe what St. Paul says of this conversion, unless it could be proved, either that he was an *impostor*, and meant to deceive; or that he was a *weak man*, and so was deceived by others.

Now, there is no reason to think that Paul was an *impostor*, and meant to deceive mankind. Impostors always seek themselves, they deceive to get *money*, or *power*, or *fame*, or *pleasure*. But Paul sought none of these: *not money*; he forsook the rich party of the Jews, to join the poor party of the Christians; for the first Christians were so poor in general, that they were supported by the contributions of the few rich that were among them. Paul himself frequently worked with his own hands. Nobody ever suspected Paul of being rich.

He sought not *power*. Who could give it him? All the powers of the earth, whether Jewish or Heathen, were against the Christians, and were employed to crush them. Great numbers were persecuted and put to death, and St. Paul himself at last.

He sought not *fame*: he became *infamous* in the esteem of the world; *being defamed*, saith he, “we entreat; we are accounted the filth and off-scouring of all things.” The name of a *Nazarene*, and afterwards that of a *Christian*, was contemptible and odious to the last degree.

Nor was it sensual *pleasure* he sought. No. He took up the cross when he took up Christianity. He knew nothing of carnal ease, or the delight of sense. His life was all activity and suffering. “He was stoned, he was beaten with rods; twice he suffered shipwreck; he was in journeyings often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in cold and nakedness.” All these things prove that Paul was no impostor; he certainly believed what he taught, and he had no bad design in teaching what he believed.

It is equally certain that Paul was not deceived by others. Who should deceive him? Not his former companions: they would have murdered him for the change. Not the poor timid Christians: they were afraid to receive him when changed. Who could form such a light in the heavens? Who could form such a sound in the air? Who could strike him and his numerous companions to the ground? Who could make Paul blind for three days? And when blind, who could restore him to sight? Indeed, there is nothing in Paul’s character that can lead us to suspect that he was deceived. He was not a weak man, nor an enthusiast. And his whole conduct for twenty years after his conversion, the temper he discovered, the doctrines he believed, the apologies that he made, and the letters that he wrote; as fully prove that he was not a weak enthusiast, and so deceived, as they do that he was no deceiver. And if Paul was neither deceived in what he believed, nor a deceiver in what he professed, it must follow undeniably, that the Christian system is not a delusion, but that it is the truth of God, the wisdom of God, and the power of God unto salvation. And let this be an answer to those, who may try to cheat you of your faith and of your salvation, by pretending contradictions and blunders in the holy Scriptures: they may tell you that this and that book was not written by the author whose name it bears, and that there is such and such a mistake in names and dates. Instead of regarding their quibbles and cavilling objections, ask them to account for the conversion of St. Paul upon any other principle than that of the truth

of the Christian religion, and they will be confounded.

But to return to the design first proposed. We intended to show, that *a praying person is a gracious person*, for Jesus Christ, in order to prove that Saul was converted, said, *Behold, he prayeth*.

This observation made respecting him is very remarkable, if you consider that he had been a *Pharisee*. Now the Pharisees were so called because they separated themselves from others, professing to be more strict in all religious duties and ceremonies than their neighbors.—“They fasted twice a week,” and “they made *long prayers*,” they prayed “standing in the synagogues,” and even “in the corners of the streets;” they prayed over and over again, “thinking to be heard for their much speaking.” Is it not strange, then, that our Lord should say of Paul, *Behold, he prayeth*! Was it a new thing for a Pharisee to pray?

There was certainly now something very different in his prayers from what he had been used to. All his former prayers are here reckoned for nothing; for now he prayeth; that is, he now begins to pray. It may be observed that the Pharisees were fond of making *public* their prayers; we nowhere read of their praying in *private*; and it is likely that they seldom did; for our Lord directs his disciples not to make their prayers in the streets, but to enter into their *closets* and pray. Probably, therefore, this was the first time in all his life that he ever prayed in secret. And there are now many people, who would not be thought to neglect their prayers at church, who make no conscience of praying at home. But we cannot well suppose that person to be a real Christian, who does not pray alone.

The prayer that Paul now offered was *sincere*. He had prayed often with his lips, now his *heart* prays. There is a great deal of sin committed by some people in their prayers. Like the hypocrites of old, “they draw nigh to God with their mouths, and honor him with their lips, but their *heart* is far from him.” Christ charged the Pharisees with doing so, Matt. xv. 7, 8. Paul was one of this sort before his conversion; but now he drew near to God with his heart. Nothing deserves the name of prayer unless it comes from the heart. It is not *words* that make prayer, it is *desires*; the felt desires of the heart made sensible of its state and its wants. There are more lies told in our churches and meetings, than at our markets. What sad hypocrisy is it for a set of gay, proud, wan-

ton people, to cry—“Lord have mercy upon us! Christ have mercy upon us! Incline our hearts to keep these laws,” &c. &c. while they neither feel the want of mercy, nor wish to obey the will of God.

Paul now began to pray in another respect. He prayed as an *humble sinner*, not as a *proud Pharisee*. When our Lord designed to expose the self-righteous pride of the Pharisees, he represented, in a parable, these two sorts of men going to the temple to pray. And what did they differ in? The one boasted of his goodness; the other, humbled, and almost broken-hearted, under a sense of his guilt, cries out, “God be merciful to me a *sinner*!” No man prays in God’s account, till he prays as a sinner, for pardoning mercy. It was during these three days’ blindness of his body, that the eyes of his understanding were opened. It was then that he first began to know that the law was *spiritual*. “He was without the law before; but now the commandment came, sin revived, and he died.” Jesus saw him in his mournful state, and hastened to his relief. Go to him, Ananias, and heal this broken-hearted penitent, for under a sense of his sin, behold he prayeth.

Paul, we may suppose, was now acquainted with the Gospel-scheme. It was probably revealed to him during these three days. And now, he not only owns Jesus as the true Messiah, but knows the gracious purpose for which he came, “this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.” This is the truth which Paul cordially received. Being well versed in the law about sacrifices, he clearly saw in them all, that Jesus Christ is the true “Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” He saw the reason of that humiliation of Jesus and his death on the cross, that was before a stumbling-block to him; and now he determines “to know nothing but Christ crucified, and to glory in nothing but the cross.” Before this, his dependence was upon his Jewish privileges—his birth, his circumcision, his zeal, his morality; but now all these things, which were *gain*, are accounted *loss*, yea, dung and dross, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and an interest in him. How differently would such a man pray from what he did before! He now comes to Jesus, and to the Father, through him, for eternal life.

APPLICATION.

WE have now taken a view of converting grace, by the example of the Apostle Paul. And let it be observed, that conver-

sion is the same for substance, at all times and in all persons. Circumstances may differ, but the work is the same. In all cases it is the wonderful work of God; always undeserved; and always produces like effects. We are not indeed to expect a vision or a voice from heaven as in this instance, but it is generally wrought by means of the word of Christ, sent home on the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit. See here the mighty hand of God! Is any thing too hard for the Lord? Here is grace indeed! free grace, sovereign grace, rich grace, abundant grace; and all this "for a pattern to them who should hereafter believe." Let none despair, when such a sinner as Saul is saved. The same grace, sinner, that changed his heart, can change thine; the same grace, that pardoned his sins, can pardon thine; and it will do so too, if, like him, thy proud heart is brought down, and thou art enabled to say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" This was his first petition; the dawn of eternal day in his soul. O that each of us might but say this from his heart! Can you follow me in these words?—"Lord, I give myself up to thee. I have done wickedly, but would do so no more. O, what wouldest thou have me to do? Let me be led into a right way for knowing and doing thy will; that I may testify my repentance, honor thy name, and obtain the forgiveness of my sins." When Paul prayed thus, the merciful Savior directed him to go into the city; and afterwards sent his servant to instruct and comfort him. So will he say to thee, Arise, wait upon God. Read and hear his word; and he shall visit thy soul with the light, power, and comfort of his great salvation.

As this text affords great encouragement to praying souls, and furnishes them with a plain and pleasing evidence of their conversion; so it marks out, as distinctly, the woeful state of a prayerless person. Dost thou live without prayer, man, woman, child?—Thou art no Christian. Thou art an Atheist; yea, much worse than an Atheist. He believes no God, and therefore cannot pray to him. You say you believe in God, but never seek him. If you can live without prayer, it is a proof of a blind mind, and of a hard heart; it shows ingratitude to God, and insensibility of want. It proves thou art a stranger to faith, to repentance, to hope, to love, to every Christian grace; for as all these are exercised in true prayer; so, the prayerless person proves he is destitute of them all. What is he then? An enemy to God, and a destroyer of his own soul. "As the

Lord liveth, there is but one step between thee and death." "Arise, O sleeper, and call upon thy God." "Turn or burn. Pray or perish."

Go on, praying, Christian. The Lord never said to the seed of Jacob, "Seek ye me in vain." He who said, *Behold he prayeth*, and observed his first breathings for mercy. He was heard. He was pardoned. He was saved. He is *praising* now. *Behold, he prayeth!* He has been praising Christ for 1700 years, and will do so to all eternity. Who would not pray now, seeing prayer shall be turned into praise, and issue in everlasting songs of joy and triumph?

PRAYER.—THOU, O God, art glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders! Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thy hands. Thou saidst Let there be light, and there was light. And thou art also the Creator of all things in the new world of grace. We adore thee, O Lord, for that glorious example of thy new-creating power which has been at this time brought before our eyes. We praise thee for the riches of thy grace in forgiving the persecuting Saul, and for turning the persecutor into a holy apostle. We thank thee for all the good which thou didst effect by his preaching and living, and for all the good which thy church still derives from his writings, and from the pattern of thy long-suffering, which is seen in mercy shown to him.

O God, we beseech thee at this time to exert the same almighty energy by which Saul of Tarsus was converted and saved. Are there not before thee some whose minds are still benighted, and whose hearts are full of ill-will against Jesus and his Gospel? Are there not many who live without prayer, having the form of godliness, but denying the power thereof?

Our heart's desire and prayer for them is, That they may be saved. O that, from this very time, if it please thee, it may be said of this and of that man, Behold, he prayeth!

SERMON XXX.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

John iii. 16. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

In these words you have the sum of the whole Gospel. Good news for sinners; glad tidings of great joy to all people. They are the words of Jesus Christ, in his admirable discourse with Nicodemus, a teacher and a ruler of the Jews. This man being convinced by the miracles of Christ, that he was "a teacher come from

God," wished to have some conversation with him; but not having yet courage enough to declare for him openly, came to him privately by night. Our Lord directly began with him on the subject of the *new birth*. "Nicodemus," said he, "except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God:" for, observe, the knowledge of the corruption of our nature, and of the necessity of being inwardly changed by grace, is the very first thing we must learn in religion. Nicodemus, with all his learning, was as yet ignorant of this; and so are many of our teachers. But Christ insists upon it, that a man must be born again; and from the doctrine of the new-birth, he passes on to that of faith in Christ, and salvation through faith. This he explains by a remarkable type or emblem of it, well known to the Jews. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Here Christ foretells his death upon the cross, and the benefit believers would derive from it. As the wounded Jew was healed by looking at the brazen serpent; so the perishing sinner is saved by looking at Christ crucified. And, that sinners may not fear rejection, it is declared in our text, that the salvation of all who believe, was the very thing that God designed in giving his Son. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." It is in the free and eternal love of God that our salvation begins. "The first of God's gifts is his love; the first gift of his love is his Son; the first gift of his Son is faith; and faith is the root of all other graces, the principle of the new life, and the key which shuts up hell, and opens the gate of heaven.

It is *the love of God* we are now to meditate upon. But O, who is equal to the subject? "Can we by searching find out God; the love of God; God, who is love? Can we find out the love of God to perfection? It is as high as heaven; what can we do? Deeper than hell; what can we know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea. O that the love of God may now be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit;" that we may "be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." In order to this, let us consider the following things:

I. The Love of God—*God so loved the world.*

II. The EVIDENCE of it—that *he gave his Son.*

And, III. The END or DESIGN of it, that *whosoever believeth might be saved.*

First, let us consider *the love of God*. Consider who it is that loves, and who are the persons beloved. HE, who loves, is the great God, who was from everlasting, infinitely happy in himself, and who needed not the aid of any creatures. HE who made all things out of nothing by the word of his power. HE, "with whom the nations are as a drop of the bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance! they are before him as nothing, yea, less than nothing, and vanity." "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him?" But what is more wonderful is, that God, who is infinitely *holy*, and "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," should ever love creatures like us, who are full of sin. He loved *the world*; this world; not angels, but men, sinful men, of all ages and countries. Not sinners of the Jews only, as some of them fondly dreamed. "Christ," saith the apostle John, "is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only," who are Jews, "but for the sins of the whole world"—for all who shall hereafter believe on him, whether Jews or Gentiles, where-soever they may be scattered throughout the whole world.

Nothing is so wonderful as the love of God to sinful man. When man was made at first, he was lower than the angels; how much lower is the *sinner* than the *man*! In some respects he is lower than the brutes; for "he has the worst qualities of the brutes without their best." Yet "God hath remembered us in our low estate, for his mercy endureth for ever." The love of creatures to one another, is generally founded on some real or supposed goodness or excellency; but there was nothing at all in man to excite the love of God, but on the contrary his hatred and wrath. "The whole world lieth in wickedness," or *in the wicked one*, the devil; under his rule and influence; full of ignorance, carnality, and enmity against God; in a state of actual rebellion against him, and without the least desire to know him, serve him, or enjoy him. Yet hear, O heavens, and be astonished O earth! God loved this world of sinners. But how much, no tongue can tell; no heart conceive; the love is so matchless, so unlike any thing in human affairs, that our text makes no comparison in order to describe it; it has no parallel or similitude among

men; and therefore, it is only said, "God so loved the world, that he gave us his Son." In most cases human love is expressed better by words than deeds; but the love of God is such, that it cannot be expressed at all by words; words are too weak; it is by actions, that God commends his love towards us; and above all by this one—the gift of his Son: and this is the *second* thing proposed—

II. The EVIDENCE of God's love; "he gave us his only begotten Son." Many are the gracious gifts of God to this world of sinners. The powers of our minds and bodies, the food we eat, the garments we wear, the health we enjoy; ten thousand thousand precious gifts call loudly upon us for daily praises. But great as these are, they are all lost in this one, like a drop of water in the sea. St. John speaking of it says, "*Herein* is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son;" as if he had said, This is love indeed; compared with this, nothing else deserves the name; and without it, what would all other gifts have proved? what do they prove to wicked men, who live and die "without Christ?" This is that gift of God, promised to our first parents in the garden; and which Abraham, David, Isaiah, all the patriarchs, and all the prophets, looked and longed for. This was "*The Mercy* promised to the fathers," (Luke i. 72.)—This is the mercy that never could have been expected, never desired. It would never have entered into the heart of men or angels to have thought of such a thing, as that God should give us his Son. And certainly it never could have been *deserved*. Man deserves nothing but hell. The common blessings of life are all forfeited by sin; and therefore we properly call our food, raiment, and health, *mercies*, for so they are; but when we consider the greatness of that gift, they disappear like the brightest stars when the sun rises. It will be a matter of astonishment to all eternity that God should so love the world as to give us his Son.

The greatness of this love appears in the greatness of the gift; in the glory and excellency of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is here called *his only begotten Son*. The angels are sons of God by *creation*; and believers are sons of God by *adoption*; but Jesus Christ is the only *begotten* Son of God. This is a name that we cannot fully explain; but it certainly signifies, that Jesus partakes of the same divine nature with his Father. "That holy thing that was born of the Virgin, was called the

Son of God." Because we, whom he came to save, "were partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise partook of the same nature." He was truly man, "flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone." But he was also as truly God. God and man in one person, "In whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." "He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person." "The WORD who was made flesh and dwelt among us, was with God, and was God." And, indeed, this is the great mystery of godliness, that God was manifested in the flesh." "Emmanuel—God with us." "The LORD our righteousness." And although the Son of God veiled his glory when on earth, and "made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant," yet his true followers "beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." "His birth, though humble, was celebrated by a multitude of the heavenly host; he had a poor lodging, but a star lighted visitants to it from a far country. He had not such attendants as other kings have, but he was attended with far better—crowds of patients getting health of body and soul. He made the dumb to sing his praises, and the lame to leap for joy; the deaf to hear his wonders, and the blind to see his glory. And though he submitted to the shameful death of the cross, heaven and earth became mourners on the occasion; the sun was clad in black, and if men were unmoved, the earth trembled; there were few to rend their garments, but the rocks were not so insensible; they rent their bowels. Death and the grave submitted to his power; the king of terrors lost his sting, and the Prince of life triumphed over him." This is the great and glorious person whom the Father freely gave from his bosom, "God's own Son;" "God's dear Son;" "God's well-beloved Son;" and surely this was the greatest possible proof of his love. When God tried Abraham, he said to him—"Take now thy *son*, thine *only* son, Isaac, whom thou *lovest*, and offer him up for a *burnt-offering*." Was ever command so difficult, so trying? Every word is like a dagger to a parent's heart; but he obeys. He consults not with flesh and blood. He takes his son to the mountain; the altar is built; the wood laid in order; the youth is bound; the fatal knife uplifted; but it is enough. The design is answered. Abraham's faith is proved, "even the faith that works by *love*. Now I know," saith the Lord, "that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld

thy son, thine *only* son from me." And may we not say, Now we know and are sure; we cannot admit a doubt of it: that God loves sinful man; seeing he withheld not his Son, his only begotten Son from us; "he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." Verily, *God is love!*

Abraham's was a rare instance. What he did was at God's command; and it was done in faith, that God would raise him again from the dead, rather than the promise should fail. But what would induce a fond parent to part with a child, even for the sake of a friend, much less of an enemy? History tells, that during a dreadful famine in Germany, a poor family, consisting of a man, his wife, and four children, were reduced to the last extremity, and on the very point of being starved to death. Knowing no other method of relief, the husband proposed that one of the children should be sold, that so they might procure bread for themselves and the rest. To this painful proposal the wife at last reluctantly consents. It was now necessary to consider which of the four should be sold. The eldest was first mentioned; but neither of the parents could think of that; the dear child was their first-born; they could not possibly part with him. The second child was then produced; but the poor mother objected. "The fine boy was the very picture of his father; she could not spare him. The third, a charming girl, came next in turn: but the father made a similar objection; the dear child bore so strong a resemblance to her mother; she must not go.—Well, only one remained. The youngest appears. But here both at once unite to say, We cannot part with him, this is our Benjamin, the darling child of our old age.—No, we will rather perish all together, than part with any one of our dear children. Let this little story illustrate, in some feeble degree, the wondrous love of God. God so loved the world, that he gave his *only* begotten Son, his dearly beloved Son, to be our Savior.

The greatness of this gift will still further appear, if we consider *to what*, and *for what*, he was given. If he had taken our nature in its highest and best form; if he had become a prince or an emperor; it had been much. But how much more was it for him to come into our world in the lowest circumstances; to be born in a stable; to be laid in a manger: to be persecuted almost as soon as born; to be a poor man, so poor that he had not a place where to lay his head; to be a despised

man, "a worm, and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the people;" to be a "man of sorrows; and especially to bear the contradictions of sinners against himself."

It is a great hardship for a good man to be forced to be for a few hours in bad company. A man who fears God can hardly endure to travel or sit a few hours with profane, lewd, or drunken people. But Christ spent above thirty years in this wicked world. Good men "sigh and cry for the abominations they behold;" "rivers of tears run down their eyes because men keep not God's laws." How then must the holy heart of Jesus Christ have been grieved with the wicked actions and words of men, and with their *wicked thoughts*, all of which were present to his mind continually!

But God's giving his Son includes still more. It includes giving them up into the hands of divine justice, and into the hands of wicked men, as the executioners thereof. "He that spared not his own Son, delivered him up for us all." So St. Peter spake of him. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." The text shows to what purpose he was thus given up. It was that believers *might not perish*. They deserved to perish. They had broken the law; they had incurred the curse; and must have perished, if no satisfaction had been made to the justice of God. But, Behold *the Lamb of God*: provided, appointed, given of God. "God sent his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." "He was made sin for us though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." O Christians, see the Son of God in his agony in the garden, sweating great drops of blood. See him standing as a criminal at Pilate's bar, falsely accused, and basely treated. See him hanging on the accursed tree; his hands and feet nailed to the cross; derided by the cruel insulting mob, and deserted by his heavenly Father. And say now—God so loved the world, but *how much*, thou canst not say. The depth of Christ's sufferings, and the height of glory to which they raise thee, express this love in stronger terms than language knows.

There is yet another way, in which God gives his Son—in the preaching of the Gospel, and in the application of Christ to the believer's heart. As the brazen serpent was exposed to view in the camp of Israel, so is Christ set before perishing

sinner in the Gospel. Herein God "sets forth his Son," and "declares his righteousness," "brings near his righteousness"—"reveals his righteousness," that it may be received by faith, and become ours by believing. "My Father," saith Christ, "giveth you the true bread from heaven: for the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world," John vi. 22. It is set before all men who hear the Gospel; but it is the food only of those, who only by faith receive it; and this leads us to the last thing proposed, which is,

III. The END or DESIGN of this gift of love—"that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

The salvation of believing sinners was the object which God had in view when he gave his Son. Supposing God would send his Son into the world, for what purpose might sinners have expected him? might they not justly fear it would be to punish them for their sins? So it seems intimated in the next verse, "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." The whole conduct of our Savior upon earth agreed with this gracious design. He came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. He came to seek and to save that which was lost. Every thing he did, and every thing he said, had this tendency.

This gracious design is expressed two ways; the first is, "That they might not perish." To *perish* is for a man to die in his sins, under the curse of the law, under the wrath of God, and to be for ever miserable in hell. This is the proper wages of sin, the real desert of every sinner: and we must know this to be our desert, before we can look to Jesus for salvation. Our Lord, in this passage, alludes to the brazen serpent in the wilderness. Now, for whom was this erected? Was it an object of curiosity, to be gazed at by a vain multitude? No; it was for the cure of the wounded Jews, who had been stung by the fiery serpents; whose blood had been poisoned by their venom, and who were ready to expire in agony. These men, being ready to perish, would gladly comply with the Divine command,—How easy, how cheap, how pleasant a method of relief! *Look and live*, was the heavenly mandate. Just so it is in the Gospel of Christ, "Look unto me," saith Christ, "and ye shall be saved." If we receive the Gospel as the testimony of God, we shall turn our eyes to no other method of relief but this. We shall renounce all notions of merit and works, we

shall receive Jesus, and rest upon him alone for salvation.

But this is not all. Salvation includes the possession of eternal life, as well as deliverance from death. "I am come, that they might have life, and might have it more abundantly," said Christ. This includes the life of grace, and the life of glory. Believers now live; they live to God; they live spiritually; they live by faith in the Son of God. Before conversion they were "dead while they lived." Now they live indeed. Christ by his Spirit lived in them, and they live in him. Christ is now their life; and when he shall appear the second time, they shall also appear with him in glory. Grace is glory in the bud. He that believeth hath everlasting life, Ver. 36: he has not only a title to it, but he has the *beginning, security, pledge, earnest, and foretaste* of it, which shall certainly issue in the full, complete, and everlasting enjoyment of it in heaven.

But there is a word of encouragement in our text which we must by no means forget, **WHOSOEVER**: God gave his Son, that "whosoever believeth in him might not perish," &c. Persons of every character; high and low, rich and poor, young and old; sinners of every degree, the greatest, vilest, and most abominable. Not only may the more *moral man*, who is also a sinner, look to Jesus and be saved; but that unhappy creature, man or woman, who has gone to uncommon lengths in sin, who thinks there is not such another sinner out of hell, and who is even tempted to despair of mercy, perhaps tempted to self-murder on account of his peculiar and terrible guilt—*Whosoever*—observe the word, *whosoever believeth*; here is a warrant for the vilest sinner upon earth to look to Jesus, to come to Jesus, to believe in Jesus: and the truth of God is pledged for it, that he shall not be cast out. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," John vi. 37.

APPLICATION.

WE have heard *great things* to-day. "The angels desire to look into these things." All the millions of the redeemed in glory are now looking into these things. And if we get to heaven, the love of God, the gift of his love, and the effect of this gift, will employ our ravished souls to all eternity. But say, my friends, how do they affect you? Or, are you totally unaffected by them? Does not this vain and wicked world engross your hearts, while the love of God, and the gifts of Christ, are quite forgotten?

But stop a moment, and consider. What are you doing! You are committing the greatest sin in the world. Unbelief is a damning sin; he that believeth not is condemned already; and this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil," so our Lord declares in this chapter. As the gift of Christ is the greatest proof that God could give of his love to the world, so, depend upon it, he will resent the contempt of it as the greatest crime. It is a crime greater than the devils in hell ever committed. They never had a Savior to despise and reject. O beware of the fatal consequences! Death is approaching, and you must appear before Christ. But how will you face him, when you know you neglect him all your days? O, what would sinners give in the great day for an interest in Christ! Worlds! worlds! millions of worlds! would be counted cheap, could they purchase an interest in him. Well, sinner, as yet there is hope. Though you have neglected long, it is not too late yet. Turn now, even now, thy weeping eyes to the cross of Jesus. Behold God's dear Son, and the sinner's dear Savior, with extended arms open to embrace thee. Hear him crying, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." O, let your heart reply, "Behold I come unto thee, for thou art the Lord my God."

And, O believer, humble believer in Jesus, what thinkest thou of Christ? Is he not precious to thee, the pearl of great price, the chief of ten thousand, and altogether lovely? What praise and love are due from thee to the Father, who gave his Son; to the Son, who gave himself; and to the Holy Spirit, who led thee to know and believe in him! Thou canst heartily say with St. Paul, *Thanks be to God for his UNSPEAKABLE GIFT!* This wonderful love of God in the gift of his Son convinces us, in the most striking manner, of the immense value of the soul, and of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, seeing that a sinful soul could not be redeemed but at such a vast expense. What an encouragement is here to him, who sees his sin *infinite*, that the blood of Christ, the blood of God, is of *infinite value* and efficacy! And what encouragement is here for the believer, who has received this greatest of gifts, that God will not withhold lesser gifts; for "he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him, freely give us all things?" Yes, "all is ours," if Christ is ours. "He

will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

Blessed be God, for Jesus Christ. Amen.

PRAYER.—ALMIGHTY God, Father of all mercies, we, thine unworthy servants, do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all men: we bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life, but above all for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ. Everlasting praises be unto God, who so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift! We beseech thee, Lord, to give us that due sense of all thy mercies, and in particular, of this thy great mercy, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we may show forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost be all honor and glory, world without end. Amen.

SERMON XXXI.

ON THE SABBATH, OR LORD'S DAY.

Exodus xx. 8. Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy.

THIS is the commandment of the great God. It is one of "*the ten words*" spoken with divine majesty on Mount Sinai, and also written by the finger of God in tables of stone. There is no commandment of the ten of greater consequence than this; yet scarcely any one is so much disregarded. Well, therefore, may it begin with the word—*Remember*; seeing that thoughtless mortals are so prone to forget it.

We are by no means to suppose that this law was given to the *Jews* only. It is not of a *ceremonial* nature, but *moral*; as all the ten are. The Sabbath was not first instituted when the law was given to Moses: it was only renewed. We read of the Sabbath in the second chapter of Genesis. It began as soon as the world began; "for on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it." There can be no doubt that Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and all the good men of old, observed the Sabbath; but when the descendants of Abraham became slaves in Egypt, it is probable that they could not observe it as they ought: but now being delivered from bondage, the law

was revived, and they are commanded to *remember* the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

This law, then, is of perpetual obligation. And if God saw it needful for Adam to keep it even in paradise, and before he sinned, how much more necessary is it for us to keep it! He had no hard work to do, from which he required rest; his heart was full of the love of God, and every day was like a Sabbath: but as for us, the labors of our bodies, and the cares of our minds, are such as to make a weekly rest absolutely necessary. Besides, we are so full of sin, so surrounded by temptation, and so apt to forget God and our souls, that we greatly need a weekly Sabbath to call away our affections from the world, and direct them to things above.

It is true we do not keep the self-same day as the Jews did. They kept the *seventh* day of the week, but we the *first*. But the morality of the Sabbath does not consist in its being the *seventh* day of the week, but in its being the *seventh* part of our time. Besides, we have the same authority for keeping the *first* day, as they had for keeping the *seventh*; for Jesus Christ is "Lord of the Sabbath;" and his apostles, who acted by his directions, and under the influence of his Spirit, constantly met for divine worship on the first day of the week, which was called "The Lord's Day," Acts xx. 7. Rev. i. 10. This was kept because it was the day of his resurrection; and as the Sabbath was first of all kept because the work of the creation was finished; and renewed when God had finished the great work of redeeming his people from bondage; so the Christian Sabbath is kept on the day when the Lord arose from the dead, having finished the great work of redeeming souls from sin, and death, and hell. There is also great reason to think that the creation Sabbath was changed when the Jews came out of Egypt, so that they kept their first Sabbath in the wilderness on the sixth day of the week, accounting it the seventh from their coming out of Egypt; and that this continued to be the Jewish Sabbath, typical, as all their ordinances were, and that upon the resurrection of Christ the Sabbath reverted to its original seventh day. Many learned men have been of this opinion, and, if they have not fully proved it, they have made it very probable. And this opinion seems to be countenanced by what St. Paul says in his epistle to the Hebrews, ch. iv. where, speaking of the Jews, he says, "they entered not into the promised rest on account of their unbelief;" and

that David, long after, speaks of "another rest," and of "another day," or season, in which it might be sought; he concludes that "there remained a rest, or sabbatism, for the people of God;" that is, a "New Testament Sabbath, a Christian Sabbath, in which believers rest in the finished work of Christ, and enjoy a foretaste of the heavenly rest."

The word *Remember* seems to intimate the necessity of preparing for it. We should remember on the Saturday, that the Lord's Day is at hand. People in trade prepare for the *market-day*; and why should not Christians get ready for the Sabbath, which is the market-day for their souls. It is a great sin that wages are paid, provisions bought, houses cleaned, perhaps linen washed, on the Sunday morning. By these, and other worldly employments, the best part of the day is lost, and perhaps only some of the last hours of it, if any at all, are devoted to God. We must *Remember* the Sabbath Day, and so prepare for it, as to be ready for the service of God, and devote the whole of the day to it.

In the further consideration of this text, we shall,

I. Show *how* the Sabbath is to be kept holy; and,

II. Give some reason *why* it should be kept holy.

In keeping the Sabbath holy, we are to consider, what *ought not* to be done, and what *ought* to be done.

What *ought not* to be done is expressed in these words: "Thou shalt not do any work—thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates." Six days are allowed for labor, but the seventh is a day of rest. Our worldly business, whatever it be, must be laid aside. The *whole* family, as well as the master of it, must cease from worldly employments; and this commandment is directed particularly to masters of families, who are to take care that all persons under their roof keep the Sabbath.

We cannot suppose that only *work*, or manual labor, or trade, is here forbidden. Every thing is forbidden, that is inconsistent with the design of the day; which is, to serve God, and edify our souls. Travelling, walking, or riding, for mere pleasure, trifling visits, paying or receiving wages, frequenting public houses, writing letters, settling accounts, reading books on ordinary subjects, yea, conversation of a worldly kind, are here forbidden. Many who will not *work* on the Lord's

Day, will *play*, and take their pleasure. But this is worse than working. St. Austin, long ago, observed, that "It was better to *plow* on the Sabbath than to *dance*."

The Sabbath is as much profaned by *idleness* as by business. Mere rest of body is the Sabbath of a beast, not of man. We have immortal souls, and this is the day in which their eternal welfare is to be sought. We have the authority of God for these assertions, Is. lviii. 13. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath,"—from trampling upon it, or from travelling on it, or from walking at large, as if under no restraint—from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, that is, from carnal pleasure—doing that which is agreeable to thy corrupt inclination; "and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, and honorable," esteeming it above all other days, taking holy pleasure in the ways of God; "and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words;" not gratifying the flesh, nor indulging in trifling and impertinent conversation; *then*, saith the Lord, "thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord," &c.—thou shalt have the honor, profit, and pleasure of it; for God hath blessed this day.

But some will say—What! is nothing at all to be done on the Sabbath? I answer, *Works of NECESSITY and MERCY are allowed*; they were so by the Jewish law. Our Savior healed the sick on that day, and reproved the Pharisees for their severity and rigor in their observance of it; showing, that if it was lawful to feed or water a beast, it was certainly lawful to do good to men on that day; observing also, that *the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath*;—it was made for the good of man, both in body and soul; and therefore he is not to be prevented from that which is necessary to his comfortable support. Doubtless, the getting of food, clothing ourselves decently, visiting the sick, bestowing alms, taking care of children, and many other things, are lawful on the Sabbath. But great care must be taken that this indulgence is not carried too far. That cannot be accounted a work of necessity or mercy, which may be done on Saturday, or deferred till Monday. Many abuse the Sabbath by journeys to see their relations and friends, which might be done on other days. Others begin or finish journeys on that day to save their own time on the week days. Marriages and funerals are often celebrated on the Lord's Day, which might as well be on another day: for

hereby many persons are hindered from the proper duties of the Sabbath. Far the greater part of visits made on this day are unlawful, as they occupy the time that ought to be spent either in public or private worship, and divert the mind from religious thoughts. Many vainly attempt to sanctify their journeys and visits, by going to a place of worship, though they spend most of the day in travelling, feasting, or idle conversation: but this is, in many cases, only a refined hypocrisy. Nor is it much better, for persons to wander miles from home to hear different preachers, if they can hear the true Gospel at home. Even the beasts are not to be employed *unnecessarily*; though they may doubtless be used, if they are conscientiously employed to contribute to our serving God the better. *Feasting* our friends on the Lord's Day is a grievous sin, as it employs too much time and care, and tends to make persons less fit for devotion. It is also very blamable to take up much time in dress, and still more so, to employ others in it. How sad a reflection is it that 10,000 *hair-dressers* are perhaps employed every Sunday! not to mention the vast number of coachmen, chaise-drivers, hostlers, publicans, and servants of all descriptions; thousands of whom are constantly debarred from the means of grace, and live and die—like Heathens.

There are also very many who deceive themselves, by attempting to compound matters with the blessed God: they will give him, formally, an hour or two of the day, and employ all the rest in a worldly manner. Where do we read in Scripture of canonical hours, or find a distinction between church hours and others? Does not the text say, "Remember the Sabbath DAY, to keep it holy?" And by what arguments can it be proved that a Sabbath Day is shorter than another? Do other days consist of 12 or 24 hours, and this of 4, or 3, or 2? If you employ a laborer, and pay him for a day, will you be satisfied if he goes to work at 11 in the morning and leaves off at 1, and does no more all the day? Is not this the true cause of a man's being satisfied with serving God so short a time, that he dislikes the service? And is not that an evidence of his being in a carnal state, and under the wrath of God? Let conscience answer it.

But this commandment not only forbids worldly employments on the Sabbath, it requires that the whole day be spent in a religious manner, especially in *the public or private exercise of God's worship*.

We should begin the day with *private*

prayer. This is necessary to prepare our minds for public worship. We ought to rise early, in order that ourselves and families may be in time at the house of God. *Early,* said the Psalmist, *will I seek thee.* Those who are alive to God would be ashamed of rising later on a Sabbath than on another day. Surely the care of our souls demands as early an attention as the affairs of our body. The whole family, if possible, should attend the morning service. In some cases, perhaps, this cannot be: but the mere preparation of a hot dinner is a poor excuse for detaining even one servant at home. Those who fear God need not be told, that family as well as private prayer should be offered up, before we go to the public worship.

PUBLIC WORSHIP is most evidently an ordinance of God, of the greatest possible importance. From the beginning of the world, the true worshippers of God have assembled together on this day, for prayer, praise, and instruction. They were always "glad when invited to go up to the house of the Lord." They accounted "a day in his courts better than a thousand." Our Savior countenanced public worship by his own presence and example. "The zeal of his Father's house ate him up." He has commanded his Gospel to be "preached to all the world," and has promised, "that when two or three gather together in his name, he will be with them."

To assemble ourselves with our fellow Christians on the Lord's Day is, therefore, the bounden duty of all; unless they mean to relinquish Christianity. And yet, it is deplorable to consider, that, perhaps, three-fourths of the people of America totally desert the house of God. We justly lament the avowed infidelity of any people; but what shall we say of Americans, who call themselves Christians, and yet never profess their faith by public acts of homage to their God and Savior? We know what excuses are made both by rich and poor; but we know also, that these excuses will not be admitted by the great Judge of quick and dead. Some will say, "We need not go to church, for we know as much as the minister can teach us." If so, you are either very wise, or he is very ignorant. If you are so wise, much may be expected from you; but it is no part of your wisdom, to neglect one of the main branches of your duty, in which you ought to seek the glory of God, the welfare of your soul, and the good of your neighbor. Jesus Christ has appointed that his ministers should preach his Gospel; and if it is

their duty to preach, it is certainly the people's duty to hear; and if you may choose to absent yourself, why may not another? why may not all? What then becomes of Christ's ordinance; or, where is your obedience to him as a King in Zion? O remember what he has said concerning this very thing, Luke x. 16. "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me." Yes, sirs, whatever pretence may be made, the person who habitually neglects the worship of God in public, will be held guilty of despising Christ.

But it is not enough merely to attend. We should go with a serious mind, desirous of humbling ourselves before God for our sins, in the confession of the church; earnestly seeking pardon and grace in the petitions offered up; and cheerfully joining in the praises and thanksgivings. Our attendance at a place of worship should not be, to see and to be seen; to be observed by others, and to make our observations on them; as appears often to be the case by the conversation of persons when the service is over. Neither should we sit as critics and judges of the minister, merely to praise or blame: for it is plain, that many either know nothing at all of the sermon when they come away, or only pronounce it a good or bad one. Our business is to seek the teaching of Christ by his Spirit through the minister. "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth!" should be the language of every soul.

There are some who excuse themselves from public worship on account of their *mean clothing*. But is a man so poor that he cannot get better? still let him wait upon God. "Godliness hath the promise of this life, as well as of that to come." Had the poor man served God better, perhaps he had not been so poor; certainly this is true, if idleness and extravagance occasioned his poverty. But it may be, it is the hand of God which has brought him so low; his poverty is not his fault, but his affliction. Still let him seek and serve the Lord; wait upon God, who knows what things thou hast need of, and knows how to supply all thy wants. Yea, it is probable that some of thy fellow-worshippers will pity thy case, and assist thee in getting employment or raiment. And as to the contempt of the proud, fear it not. Good men will pity thee. They must be bad, indeed, who will despise thee; regard them not.

There are others who excuse themselves from public worship by saying—"We do not see that people who attend are better

than others. We are as good as they." What have you to do with others? To their own master they stand or fall. Perhaps they would do worse, if they did not so; perhaps you would do better, if you did. If they *abuse* the means of grace, will that excuse your *neglecting* them? But your business is with yourselves.—Worship God.

But the worship of God in public is not the whole duty of the Sabbath; *reading the Scriptures* at home is equally a necessary part of it. Indeed they ought to be read daily; but as most persons have more time on the Lord's day, they should then be particularly studied. Meditation, or fixed, affectionate thinking upon the things of God, with examination of our heart and ways, is another branch of duty. Those who have families, should take care that they all improve the day, both in public and private. The neglect of this is the sad cause of so much Sabbath-breaking. But heads of families may tremble to think, that they partake of the sins of children and servants, if they do not endeavor to restrain them. Parents should *catechise* their children; and inquire what they remember and understand of the sermons they hear. Above all, earnest prayer should be offered up, and with the whole family; and that, not only on the Sabbath evening, but on the morning also; and indeed on the morning and evening of every day in the week.

II. Let us briefly consider the reasons why we should sanctify the Sabbath.

The authority of God is of itself a sufficient reason.—God commands; let man obey. It is at his peril, if he refuses. Surely we owe this obedience to him who made us, and in whom "we live, and move, and have our being." We are indebted to him for every breath we draw; and is it too much for us, in return for all his kindness, to separate one day in seven to his blessed service, that we may know him, love him, please him, and glorify him? Surely this is "our reasonable service."

The goodness of God calls us to it. If God had not appointed a Sabbath, some cruel masters would have allowed their servants no rest from their toil; yea, covetous men would perhaps have destroyed themselves by their labor. But, by the goodness of God in this merciful appointment, the wearied body of the laborer is refreshed, and in the cheerful service of his God his mind is enlivened; and thus is he fitted for the duties of another week: while his immortal soul is prepared by divine grace for a happier world hereafter.

The example of God is another argument. "In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and rested the seventh day." The whole work of creation was finished in six days; after which nothing new was made. God then rested, "not as one weary, but as one well pleased with the instance of his own goodness, and the manifestations of his own glory;" and this he did as an example to man. The patriarchs rested in the contemplation of God's works of creation. The Jews rested in the thankful remembrance of their redemption from Egypt. And Christian believers now rest in the finished work of Christ's redeeming love.

God's blessing this day is another reason why we should keep it holy. The Sabbath is a blessed day, for God hath blessed it. He expects us to bless him on it, and we may expect him to bless us. He does bless it. From the beginning of the world until now, his people have found it good for them to wait upon God. His service is perfect freedom. His ways are full of pleasure. "This is the day which the Lord hath made, he will be glad and rejoice therein."

APPLICATION.

How awfully is the day of God profaned! It is a great sin. It is a national sin; for though the laws of the United States require us to obey this law of God, yet it is despised by all sorts of people. The great and rich set the example. They generally travel on the Lord's Day. Others of them have feasts, and some music and card parties; while others ride abroad to show their fine horses and carriages. Tradesmen, casting off all regard to religion, form parties of pleasure, and resort to the country for carnal amusement. Inferior persons spend the day in idleness, drinking, and lewdness. Thus, all sorts of people conspire to cast contempt on the authority of God, to ruin their own souls, and bring down judgments on a wicked land. In some parts of this country, the Sabbath seems almost forgotten; and though the church-bell rings, and the shops are shut, yet people buy and sell, drink and swear, proclaiming to all men, that the fear of God is not before their eyes. Magistrates and church-wardens take little or no care to prevent these evils, and so become partakers of other men's sin.

But stop, and consider, what will be the end of these things! Will not God requite it? He certainly will. Yea, he often shows his anger now against Sabbath-breaking. It is dreadful to consider how

many persons are drowned, or otherwise destroyed, while committing this sin. There are ten times more accidents of this kind on the Lord's day than other days. Sabbath-breaking is the inlet of all other evils, and the certain road to ruin. Habits of vice, contracted by evil company on this day, are often their own punishment in this world. The drunkard beggars his family, and destroys his constitution; and the thief commonly ends his days at the gallows. How many dying malefactors have warned others to avoid this sin, confessing that it was by breaking the Sabbath they were brought to such a dreadful end! O, sirs, if you have the reason of men, if you have any fear of God, if you have any regard for your family or country, if you have any love to your precious souls—"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

And, O, be thankful for this privilege, you who enjoy it. Blessed be God, the Sabbath is not abolished in this country, as it was in France. May God ever preserve to us the blessing of a Christian Sabbath, and enable us to employ it diligently. Let it be remembered that "bodily service profiteth little;" God says, "My son, give me thine heart." Let him be worshipped in spirit and in truth. Attendance on the means of grace will answer little purpose, unless we are brought by the influence of his Holy Spirit, to know and feel our lost and ruined state as sinners, and are led to know Christ as revealed in the Gospel, and to believe on him to the saving of our souls. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Let us, therefore, "take heed what we hear," that it is the Gospel of the free grace of God, and not a system of mere morality; which never converted a soul yet, nor ever will: and "let us take heed how we hear," that it be seriously, and with a desire "to be taught of God." Let us "mix faith with the work, that it may profit our souls." Let us lay it up in our hearts, and practise it in our lives. Thus shall our Sabbaths on earth prepare our souls for the perfect knowledge, love, likeness, and enjoyment of God our Savior, in the realms of everlasting happiness above. To which may God, of his infinite mercy in Christ, bring us all! Amen and Amen.

PRAYER.—THOU, Lord, art good and doest good. We thank thee for setting apart a day of holy rest, and for connecting a blessing with the observance of it. May every returning Sabbath be welcome to us. May we always be glad when they say unto us, Let us go into the house of the Lord. May we ever find, that a day in thy courts is better than a thousand.

Thou, O God, art a Spirit; help us in all our devotions, to worship thee in spirit and in truth—May our fellowship be with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

We praise thee, Lord, that thou hast commanded thy servants to go out into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and that, through thy good providence, the Gospel has been preached to us. We delight to hear that Jesus, who died for our sins, rose again for our justification, on the first day of the week. We should say on the morning of every Sabbath, This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Save now, we beseech thee, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech thee, send now prosperity: may it please thee to give to all thy servants increase of grace, to hear weekly thy word, to receive it with pure affection, and to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit.

Have compassion, gracious Lord, on those who are saying to thee, by their conduct, if not in words, Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. Have compassion on those who spend the hours of the Sabbath in worldly business, in pleasure, or in sin; who neglect thy worship, and will not hear thy Gospel. May they be born again, and become new creatures in Christ Jesus, that so, they also being taught to call the Sabbath a delight, may remember it to keep it holy.

And O that it may be our happiness at last to enter the rest which remaineth for the people of God, and to spend an eternal Sabbath in the kingdom of Heaven, through his merits who once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.

SERMON XXXII.

THE ONLY FOUNDATION.

1 Cor. iii. 11. For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

A FOUNDATION is that part of a building which is first laid, and upon which all the rest stands: if the foundation of a building is bad, or gives way, the whole edifice is in danger: it is therefore of great importance that it be solid and durable. Now, the Scriptures often compare spiritual things with natural things; and the church of God is here compared to a *house* or *temple*, "a habitation of God through the Spirit," or as it is expressed, Ver. 9, "Ye are God's building." Of this building, Jesus Christ is the foundation. The whole church of God, in all ages and in all places, rests entirely upon him. He is, to every true member of it, what a foundation is to a building; he bears the whole weight of it.

The occasion of these words was this. There had been divisions among the Christians at Corinth. They admired one preacher and despised another. One party was for Paul, another for Apollos. St. Paul reproves them for it; and shows them that

all their ministers were but like workmen employed in the same buildings. Paul, who taught them the first principles of religion, laid the foundation. Apollos, and other preachers who followed him, built them up, or took further pains for their instruction. But as to the foundation, it was already laid: and no teacher, taught of God and sent by him, would direct the people to any other way of salvation than through faith in Christ. For, saith he, "Other foundation can no man lay than is laid, which is Jesus Christ." The great truth contained in these words is often mentioned in the Scriptures. When St. Peter was brought before the Jewish rulers for preaching Christ, he told them boldly, that "He was the stone which they had set at naught," and added—"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." In like manner St. Paul, showing that God alone must have the glory of our salvation, says, that "Christ Jesus is made to us Wisdom—and Righteousness—and Sanctification—and Redemption—that is—*Wisdom* to enlighten our ignorant minds—*Righteousness* to justify our guilty persons—*Sanctification* to renew our depraved natures—and *Redemption*, to complete the whole, in the resurrection of our bodies." Or, as more briefly expressed in another place, *Christ is all, and in all*.

There are four respects in which Christ may be said to be our foundation.

I. He is the foundation of all *saving knowledge*.

II. He is the foundation of our *acceptance with God*.

III. He is the foundation of all *holy obedience*; and

IV. He is the foundation of all *true happiness*, here and hereafter.*

I. Jesus Christ is the foundation of all *saving knowledge*—I mean of that knowledge which is necessary to salvation; for it is eternal life truly to know God the Father and Christ the Savior. Christ came to save us from our ignorance, as well as from our sins. All men, as born into the world, are in a state of complete darkness and blindness as to the things of God. Reason, or the light of nature, as it is called, leads no man to Christ. The wisest heathens were "vain in their imagination, and their foolish heart was

darkened." Rom. i. Nor is this the case of the heathen only; the *natural man*, that is, every man by nature, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God—they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." 1 Cor. ii. 14. And what is worse, the natural man hateth the light. As the thief and the adulterer dread the morning, so every sinner, being under the power of the prince of darkness, "hateth the light, neither cometh he to the light, lest his evil deeds should be reproved." John iii. 20. He shuns the light of God's word, lest he should see himself, and be filled with shame and painful conviction by the discovery of his sin. Now it was one principal end of Christ's coming from heaven, to be the light of the world. He preached recovery of sight to the blind. He opened the bodily eyes of some who were born blind, to show that he could also open the eyes of the mind. He is to the soul of every believer, what the sun is to our bodily eyes. One great design of the Gospel is "to open men's eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light." Not that the world alone is sufficient for this purpose, unless accompanied by the power of the Spirit of God; "He only, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, can shine into our minds," so as to give us the true light.

Here let us stop a moment, and inquire, what do *we* know of this? Is it so that all men are born blind? Have we been sensible of this? We should think it a miserable thing to sit for several days, as the Egyptians once did, without the light of the sun. But our state by nature is far worse. It is a good thing to be sensible that this is the case; for, saith St. Paul, in the 18th verse of this chapter,—“If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise; that is, if he seems to have a large stock of worldly wisdom, let him renounce it all as insufficient to lead him into Gospel truth; let him make Christ, by his word and Spirit, the foundation of all his wisdom, and then, patiently endure to be called a fool by the world. O, let us be like the poor blind man to whom Jesus said—“What wouldest thou that I should do unto thee? Lord, said he, that I might receive my sight.” Happy man! he prayed not in vain. “Immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way.” Mark x. So shall it be with us, if, like him, we cry, “Jesus, have mercy on us!” With this desire let us come to the preaching of the Gospel: and whenever we open

* The plan, with some other parts of this sermon, are borrowed from Two Discourses, on the same text, preached by the late Rev. W. Romaine, before the University of Oxford.

our Bibles, let us pray, "Lord, open thou mine eyes, that I may see wonderful things in thy law." We are next to show,

II. Jesus Christ is the foundation of all *acceptance with God* the Father.

All men are sinners. This is generally confessed. But till Christ enlighten the mind of a sinner, he is not affected by it. He sees not the sinfulness of sin. He sees not the horrid impurity of his heart. He is not alarmed with the danger of his condition. He is not aware that the holiness, justice, and truth of God are against him. But this is really his case. The law of God requires perfect love, and sinless obedience; or it puts the offender under the curse; for it is written, "cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." You must *continue* (without intermission) in *all things* (not keeping nine commandments and breaking the tenth, and not keeping them all outwardly and breaking them in thought) not only to purpose well, but to *do* them. And which of us has kept the law in this manner? Who can say that he never offended, in thought, word, or deed? Certainly every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God, who searcheth all hearts.

Now what is the consequence? "The wages of sin is death." God has passed the decree, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." God is faithful and just to fulfil his decree, and he is Almighty to execute his sentence. What then can be done? Is there no remedy? Must sinful man sink for ever under the divine wrath? Two things must be done. Full satisfaction must be made to the holiness and justice of God for past offences, and the sinful nature must be renewed and made holy. But can man do these? As soon might he create a new world. The natural man has neither will nor power to renew and cleanse his nature. Who can say, I have made my heart clean; I am pure from sin? No man can say it truly. It is God's work. So David prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." And until God creates a clean heart, how can any thing clean proceed out of it? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Who, in an impure nature, can do a pure action? Who, under the curse of the law, under the sentence of condemnation, can perform a meritorious service? It is impossible. The Scripture has declared "There is none righteous, no not one;" and that "by the

deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified."

But what is impossible to man is possible to God. Blessed be his name, he has, in infinite wisdom and love, devised a way for our acceptance—a way honorable to himself, and easy for us. He has sent his own Son into our world, in the likeness of sinful flesh; and by making him sin for us, he has condemned sin in the flesh, that we may be made the righteousness of God in him. Jesus Christ was God and man in one person. By the divine and human natures in him, whatever he did and suffered became truly divine and infinite. Our nature was wholly defiled and impure. Christ came in a nature perfectly pure and spotless. In this nature he obeyed the whole law; he continued in all things written in the law to do them. He also humbled himself to suffer what we deserved to suffer for our disobedience. "He redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us." And thus, "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, even so, by the obedience of one, many are made righteous." Being made perfect through obeying and suffering, he became the author of eternal salvation. He is now able to save sinners to the uttermost. He has the infinite merit of his obedience to atone for their disobedience. He has the infinite merit of his suffering to save them from suffering. He died to save them from the second death. He rose again, that they might rise to a newness of life here in grace, and to life everlasting in glory. And he now ever lives to make intercession, and to act as a Mediator between God and man, able and willing to plead the merit of his life and death, for the acceptance of every sinner who comes to God the Father through him.

Thus is Jesus Christ the foundation of all our acceptance with God. Thus St. Paul speaks, Eph. i. 6. "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us **ACCEPTED IN THE BELOVED.**" Christ is the beloved of the Father, "his dear Son." In whom he is well pleased—pleased with his person—pleased with his atonement—it was a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savor. And for his sake, he is well pleased with us, if we believe in him; he accepts us, *in him*, and loves us as his dear children. This is being saved by grace. This secures all the glory to God; and his free grace, which is praiseworthy and glorious, is magnified by men and angels.

In this way only have sinners been saved from the beginning. The Lord God clothed Adam and Eve with the skins of those beasts they slew in sacrifice, and thus they were accepted through faith in the righteousness of the great sacrifice, and not by their own righteousness, denoted by the fig-leaves with which they clothed themselves. It was faith in the promised Lamb of God that rendered Abel and his offerings more acceptable than Cain and his offering. Thus Abraham was justified, for he believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness. This righteousness, St. Paul says, "was witnessed by the law and the prophets—even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe."

And now, men and brethren, let it be asked—Is this *our* foundation? Whatever we look to, hope in, or depend upon, for our acceptance with God, that is our foundation. But it highly concerns us to know whether it be this true and solid foundation, this "rock of ages," or some other, which will fail us in the day of trial. Whatever our foundation be, if it be not Christ, it is wrong; for our text says—"other foundation can no man lay than CHRIST." Now, is any man building his hopes on his own works? Is he saying, "I am not so great a sinner as some men are—I do no harm—I do my best endeavors—I have a good heart—I say my prayers—I go to church—I am sorry for my sins—I am charitable to the poor, and so on." Suffer me to ask—*Is this Christ?* All this is building on *self*. It discovers a total ignorance of our sinful state by nature, and a total ignorance of the Gospel which reveals the righteousness of Christ. Besides, if we could work out a righteousness of our own, then there was no occasion for Jesus, and he died in vain. O let us beware of stumbling as the Jews did, at this stumbling stone, Rom. ix. 32, for whoever seeks acceptance by the works of the law, stumbles against this rock, instead of building on it. And so St. Peter speaks, "Unto you who believe, he is precious."—He is speaking of Christ as the precious corner-stone of the church; but, he adds, "he is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient." 1 Pet. ii. 7, 8. On the contrary, he makes it the true character of all believers, that they "come to Christ, the living stone, and are built upon him, a spiritual house." And this leads us in the next place to show, that

III. Jesus Christ is the foundation of all *holy obedience*.

Many persons are afraid that the doctrine of faith is contrary to good works; and some have said—"If we are not to be saved by good works, what occasion is there for them?" We answer, "Good works are the breath of faith." A living man breathes, and a true faith works. St. James speaks of pretended, or dead faith, and says, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also." Works are the proper fruit and evidence of faith, and that which doth not produce them is false. But the right faith, that which comes to Christ as the foundation, and builds alone on him, is always fruitful. And so far is it from being true, that faith is contrary to good works, that we affirm, there can be no good works without faith. The Scripture saith, "Without faith it is impossible to please God," and it declares, that "Faith worketh by love;" and again, that it *purifies the heart*; and again, that it *overcomes the world*; not that faith does all this by its own power, but as it unites us to Christ, and derives virtue from him; and thus he is the foundation of all holy obedience.

Man, in his natural state, cannot perform any holy obedience. He wants both will and power, until his person be accepted through Jesus Christ, and united to him by true and lively faith. The doctrine of the Episcopal Church on this point is very clear and full. In the 13th article she says, that "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God; forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Christ—yea, rather for that they are not done, as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin." What then becomes of the merit of works? And how absurd is it, as Bishop Beveridge observes, to think of "being justified by good works, when we can do no good works till we are first justified!" Our fallen nature is wholly sinful. "In our flesh dwelleth no good thing;" and till we are in Christ, and so made new creatures, no good thing can dwell in us. "He that believeth not is condemned already." He is in the state of a rebel condemned to die, who cannot do any legal action till the attainder be removed. Besides, the dominion of sin in a natural man is absolute and universal. Sin reigns in his mortal body; he obeys it in the lust thereof; he willingly yields his members as instruments of unrighteousness, uncleanness, and iniquity. He is the slave of the devil, led captive

by him at his will. Satan says to him, Be drunk, be lewd, be profane, and the wretched slave submits, even though his poor body suffers for it, and he sees death and damnation before his eyes. This also the church strongly affirms in her 10th article. "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works to faith and calling upon God: wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing (going before) us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will." This is the doctrine of Scripture—"It is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure." Phil. ii. 13.

There is a real, spiritual, though mysterious, union between Christ and believers, and it is expressed in Scripture by various images. For instance, Christ is the *head* of the body; believers are the members of it. Christ is the *vine*; believers are the branches. So he said to his disciples, John xv. "I am the vine, ye are the branches. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me, (or separate from me) *ye can do nothing*." It is, therefore, evident that Christ must be the foundation of all holy obedience. It is not enough to be what the world calls a virtuous man, a good liver, a moral person. Acceptable obedience is that which is performed by a man in Christ; one who, sensible of his sin and misery, has come to him by faith for wisdom, then for righteousness, and now for strength. Christ dwells in the heart of such a man; and whatever trial he has to bear, whatever duty he has to perform, whatever temptation he has to resist, he comes to Christ for strength, and "out of his fullness he receives, and grace for grace"—grace in the believer, answerable in some measure to the grace of the Savior. He is conformed to Christ both in his death and resurrection; by the influence of the one, he dies to sin; by that of the other, he lives to God.

Brethren, is it so with you? There are many who seem advocates for virtue and morality, and some, like the Pharisees, who abound in works of devotion; while, like them, they wash only the outside of the cup and platter; forgetting that the heart must first be purified, and the person accepted, before there can be any works performed pleasing and acceptable to God.

We are not to imagine that our own good desires and endeavors will recommend us to God, that when we have done all the good we can, we may venture to hope in his mercy, and trust Christ as a make-weight to fill up our defects. No; exactly otherwise. We must first come to God, by Christ, as miserable sinners; receive from him the pardon of our sins and acceptance of our persons: and then seek the sanctification of our natures by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the last place,

IV. We are to show that Christ is the foundation of *all true happiness*, here and hereafter.

Every man longs to be happy: but few are so. The reason is, men seek the living among the dead. It is not in the power of worldly things to make us happy. Sin has written *Vanity* on all the creatures, and filled the world with sorrow. Man, in his search for happiness, has turned his back on God, the fountain of true felicity; nor can he ever be happy till he returns to God. This can only be by Jesus Christ. Happiness must commence in reconciliation to God. It was once well said by a minister who happened to be at an inn, where he heard some persons full of vain and noisy mirth—"Gentlemen (said he) if your sins are forgiven, you do well to be merry." But what title has that man to happiness, who is a child of wrath, and under the curse of the broken law? But when a sinner has fled for refuge to Christ, he is entitled to strong consolation. He that believeth hath everlasting life. Being justified by faith, he hath peace with God. *Be of good cheer*, said Christ to some, *your sins are forgiven you*. And it is the happiness of some now to know this assuredly. Having the Spirit of God as a spirit of conviction, humiliation, faith, prayer, and holiness, they have thereby the *seal* of God, the *witness* or *testimony* of God, that they have passed from death unto life. They taste that the Lord is gracious. They find solid delight in his word and ways. A day spent in his courts is better than a thousand, and they prefer an hour of communion with him to all the years they spend in vanity and sin.

This is the earnest of heaven. Their happiness now is in having Christ with them. Their happiness hereafter shall consist in being with Christ, to behold and share his glory. An inheritance is reserved for them, which is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away. Freed from this body of sin and death, delivered from this present evil world, they shall be

for ever employed in admiring, adoring, and praising the riches of free, sovereign, and distinguishing grace. At present we are unable to form a just idea of heavenly glory, but this we know as to true happiness, whether on earth or in heaven, Jesus Christ is all in all.

To conclude. We have now seen that Jesus Christ is the foundation of all true wisdom—of all acceptance with God—of all obedience, and of all real happiness. And is he so to us? Do we apply to him, that we may become wise to salvation? Do we seek and expect pardon and acceptance only through him? Do we derive grace and strength from him? And is he the source of our happiness? Important inquiries, brethren, worthy your serious attention! O, you that build for eternity, examine your foundation, for if it be not *Christ*, it will fail. The house will fall, and great will be the fall of it.

But some have believed through grace. Take encouragement from what God himself says, in commendation of this foundation, Isa. xxviii. 16. "Behold, I lay in Sion, for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone; a precious corner-stone; a sure foundation. He that believeth shall not make haste."—*A stone*. Every thing else is sliding sand, is yielding air, is a breaking bubble. *A tried stone*. Tried by millions of depraved and ruined creatures, who always found him able and willing to save to the uttermost. *A corner-stone*, uniting Jews and Gentiles, and all believers, in one harmonious bond of brotherly love. *A precious stone*. More precious than rubies; the pearl of great price; and the desire of all nations. *A sure foundation*. Such as no pressure can shake; such as will never fail those humble penitents, who cast their burden on the Lord. *Whosoever believeth*, though pressed with adversities, or surrounded by dangers, shall not make haste. He shall possess his soul in patience. And not only amidst the perilous changes of life, but even in the day of judgment, he shall stand with boldness. He shall *look up*, to the grand Arbitrator—*look round*, on all the solemnity of his appearance—*look forward*, to the unalterable sentence—and neither feel anxiety, nor fear damnation.

PRAYER.—THANKS be unto God for this stone, this tried stone; this precious corner-stone, this sure foundation; may God help us to build upon it!

May JESUS Christ be the foundation of our knowledge in spiritual things. Blessed Lord, thou art saying to each of us, as thou didst to the blind man in the Gospel, What wouldst thou

that I should do unto thee? May every one who has been hitherto spiritually blind, reply, Lord grant that I may receive my sight! May God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine into their hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

May Christ be the foundation of our acceptance with God the Father. We read that the wages of sin is death, and that the soul that sinneth shall die. We have sinned and deserve to perish; but may we be redeemed from the curse of the law through him who was made a curse for us. Thus may we be accepted in the Beloved, to the praise of the glory of thy grace.

May Jesus Christ be the foundation of our obedience. May we have that faith which worketh by love, which purifieth the heart, and overcometh the world; that being redeemed from all iniquity, we may be zealous of good works: Work in us, O God, both to will and to do thy good pleasure.

And in Jesus Christ may we have real and lasting felicity. Say unto us, O Lord, I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy iniquities, and will not remember thy sins. Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you. Through the merits of the Savior, may we, after death, arrive in thy presence, where is fullness of joy; and at thy right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore.

SERMON XXXIII.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

1 John v. 7. For there are three that bear record in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.

ALL religion supposes the worship of a God; and therefore, in all worship, the first thing to be considered is, *who* that God is; or what sort of a being is to be worshipped. The Heathens worshipped a great many gods; as many as thirty thousand have been mentioned: but all Christians admit that there is but ONE only, the living and true God. Now all the knowledge we have of God is from the Scriptures. If God had not been pleased to give us the Bible, we should to this day have been worshipping idols, as the former inhabitants of this country did, and as many millions of Pagans now do. Reason, alone, never yet led any person to the right knowledge of God, nor ever will. The learned Greeks and wise Romans knew no more of God than the savage Indians. The knowledge of God which Noah and his sons had was gradually lost and corrupted. But God made himself known in a particular manner to Abraham, and to his posterity the Jews: among whom the knowledge of the true God was preserved till the time of Christ, and now, by his Gospel, this knowledge is given to us, and to all

who receive the Scriptures as the word of God.

Now, the same Scriptures which assure us there is but *one* God, speak of him under the three names of *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*; and our text plainly declares that *these three are one*. This doctrine is generally called the doctrine of the *Trinity*, which signifies *Tri-Unity*, or three in one. This doctrine has been thought by most Christians to be very plainly revealed in the word of God; nevertheless there were some persons of old, and there are some now, who dispute or deny it; and these people are called *Arians*, or *Socinians*; and some of them now call themselves *Unitarians*. We ought to be much on our guard against those who would rob us of "the faith once delivered to the saints," and of which this is an eminent part. For you will please to observe, that those who deny the doctrine of the Trinity seldom stop there; they generally deny also the atonement of Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit on the heart, so leave us very little of the Gospel to believe. Indeed, many who begin their apostasy in the denial of the Trinity, complete it in becoming downright Infidels and Atheists. As a right notion of God is connected with all true faith and holy practice, it is of great consequence for us to be well established in this doctrine. It shall therefore be our present business to prove, that

In the Unity of the Godhead there are three divine Persons.

It may be proper to remark, that, with respect to this doctrine, it is not necessary that we should be able fully to *explain* it, or show how the three divine persons subsist. This is, and must be, a *mystery*. There are many people, in this age of reason, as they call it, who dislike and reject every thing mysterious; but this arises entirely from their pride. There are many mysteries in nature; we are mysteries to ourselves. We know little of the nature of our own bodies, and still less of our souls. Is it any wonder then that we should know little of God, or that the divine nature should be mysterious to us? Let us beware of pride, especially the pride of our understandings. This pride ruined the angels who fell. It ruined our first parents; and it will ruin us eternally, if it be suffered to prevail. As we should never have known any thing of God but by the Bible, let us be content to take the Bible account of God, which is, indeed, his own account of himself. And let us remember what our Savior said to his disciples, when he discovered the workings of

pride among them, Matt. xviii. 3. Having set a child in the midst of them, he said, "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." A little child is obliged to take upon trust what his infant capacity cannot yet comprehend; and it is the office of Christian faith to take God at his word.

I would also remark, that in our reception of this Scripture doctrine, we are not bound to adopt the mode of expression used or enforced by any particular divines or churches. Some good men, in their attempts to explain the doctrine, have rather perplexed it. Some good men have said, that "the Father is the fountain of Deity,"—that "he communicated his whole essence to the Son,"—that "the Son is entirely begotten of the Father," and that he is "very God of very God." As these expressions are only private interpretations of a Bible truth, we are at liberty to admit or reject them, as they appear to be scriptural or not.

Now let us proceed to a brief proof of the doctrine advanced, viz. *In the Unity of the Godhead there are three divine persons*. By *Godhead* we mean the divine nature. We maintain the *Unity* of the Godhead; that there is but one God; yet we assert, as our text does, that there are *three* in the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and that these three are one.* There is but one God. It is impossible there should be more. Reason itself shows that there cannot be more than one being, who is *first*. God is the *first cause* of all being, and we cannot conceive of two or more *first causes*. God is also a self-sufficient being; he existed alone; he can do every thing of himself; he needs not the help of other beings. "Now, if there were two such beings, they could do no more than one could do; if they could, then one could not be *self-sufficient* and *all-sufficient*; each of them could not be of God, if they could want or receive any help from one another. There cannot therefore be two Gods; for if one is *all-sufficient*, the other would be needless and useless." It is the great doctrine of Scripture, that there is one God, Isa. xlv. 5. "I am the

* Perhaps you will be told that this verse is not found in some ancient manuscripts of the New Testament, but has been added by the Trinitarians. But we are assured by men of the first learning and credibility, that it is found in the most ancient copies: and whoever examines will find that the sense of the chapter is not complete without it. But the truth of the doctrine does not depend on a sense, as we shall plainly prove.

LORD, and there is none else; there is no God beside me." Deut. vi. 4. "Hear, O Israel; the LORD our God is one Lord." Mark xii. 32. "There is one God; and there is none other but he." Jer. xxiii. 24. "Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord." 1 Kings viii. 39. "For thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men." This is the God alone who ought to be worshipped. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."

The adversaries of this doctrine call themselves *Unitarians*, by which they mean to intimate their belief of only one God, and insinuate that we, who believe the Trinity, admit of more than one God. But we deny the charge. We maintain, as strongly as they, that there is only one God; and we think it perfectly consistent with this belief to acknowledge three Persons in the Godhead. We allow that the word *persons* is not found in Scripture, and may convey an idea somewhat too gross. But this is owing to the poverty of our language, which does not furnish us with a better term. And we think it justifiable, because *personal properties* and *personal acts* are described to each of the divine three. But we contend not for the word, but the thing. It is enough for us to say, with the text, "there are THREE that bear record in heaven, the FATHER, the WORD, and the HOLY GHOST."

That there is a *plurality* in the Deity, is evident from the Old Testament. This, you know, was written in *Hebrew*; and, the name which is generally translated by the English word *God*, is in the Hebrew *plural*, and signifies more than one. It is *Elohim*, which is in the plural number, as *Gods* would be in English: and this word is often joined with the Hebrew word *JEHOVAH*, which is translated *LORD*; and whenever you find the word *Lord* in capital letters, thus (*LORD*) it means *Jehovah*, a name which signifies the essence of God, "He who was, and is, and is to come." Now there is a passage in *Deut.* vi. 4, where you have both these names, and which fully proves the doctrine of the Trinity. "Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD." If the word *Lord* and the word *God* signified just the same, the passage would be nonsense; it would be only saying, the Lord is Lord, or one is one. But the meaning is, *JEHOVAH*, our Elohim, our covenant God, Father, Son, and Spirit, is one Jehovah. He is one in Essence, though three in Person. The Jews are unwilling to own that this is the meaning of the names of God in Hebrew,

but it is entirely owing to their hatred to Jesus Christ. If any are converted to Christianity, as some have been, they own it immediately.* Thus *John Xeres*, a converted Jew, about seventy years ago, when he published his reasons for becoming a Christian, says, "The Christians confess Jesus to be God; and it is this that makes us look upon the Gospels as books that overturn the very principles of religion, the truth of which is built upon this article, the *Unity of God*. In this argument lies the strength of what you object against in the Christian religion." Then he undertakes to prove, that the unity of God is not such as he once understood it to be, in unity of *Person*, but of *Essence*, under which more persons than one are comprehended; and the first proof he offers, is that of the name of *Elohim*. "Why else," says he, "is that frequent mention of *God* by means of the plural number; as in Gen. i. 1, where the word *Elohim*, which is rendered *God*, is of the plural number, though annexed to a verb of the singular number? which demonstrates that there are several persons partaking of the same divine nature and essence."

This *plurality* is restricted to a *Trinity* of persons, namely, three, whose names we have in the text. And here observe, that the names, *Father*, *Word* or *Son*, and *Spirit*, are not intended to describe the manner in which the three divine persons *subsist*, but the manner in which they *act*: but what they are *in themselves* (that is not revealed) not what they are *to us*, according to the respecting offices which they have been pleased to assume in the redemption of man. And therefore, though one of the names of office may seem greater than the rest; yet this does not denote that the person who bears the name is greater than the other. The name of the *Father* may seem greater than that of the *Son*, or of the *Spirit*: and Christ speaks of the Father as greater than he; and the Spirit as well as the Son is "sent;" but as these are names of *office*, and not of *essence*, they only describe the nature of the office assumed, which may be greater or less; but as to the essence there is no difference or inequality; but as it is expressed in the Athanasian Creed—"In this Trinity, none is before nor after another; none is greater or less than another; but the whole three persons are co-eternal to-

* See an excellent treatise, entitled the Catholic Doctrine of a Trinity, proved by above an hundred short and clear Arguments in the Words of Scripture, by Mr. Jones, Rector of Pluckley, &c. printed for Rivington.

gether, and co-equal. The Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal."

Our further proof of the Trinity shall be from the history of man's creation—the application of the name of the Deity to each Divine Person distinctly—the institution of baptism; and the apostolical blessing.

In the history of man's creation we find these words, Gen. i. 20, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Surely this expression denotes that there is a plurality of persons in the divine nature, or why should it be used? Some tell us it is only an accommodation to the mode of speaking used by kings, who in their public acts say *we* and *us*. But this is ridiculous; for kings had no existence before the creation of man. Besides, kings use this phrase out of modesty, or to signify the concurrence of their council; but "who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor?" Rom. xi. 34. In like manner we find the Lord God saying, after man had fallen, Gen. iii. 22, "Behold, the man is become like one of us." Some think this was spoken *ironically*, in allusion to Satan's promise, when he tempted our first parents to eat of the forbidden tree. "Ye shall be as God," &c. Others think it refers to the covenant, in which *one* of the divine persons had engaged to become *man*, in order to redeem man. Be this as it may, the expression plainly proves a plurality, such as is more plainly expressed, John i. 1, "In the beginning was the WORD," (the very name used for Christ in the text) "*and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*" But again,

The name of God is applied to each of the divine persons distinctly. That the *Father* is called *God* need not be proved. *Jesus Christ* is also called *God* in many places of Scripture. Thomas said to him, John xx. 28, "My LORD, and my GOD." St. Paul says, Rom. ix. 5, "He is God over all, blessed for ever." St. John says, 1 John v. 20, "Jesus Christ is the TRUE God, and eternal life. The Psalmist says, that the Israelites in the wilderness "tempted and provoked THE MOST HIGH GOD;" and St. Paul, speaking of the same thing, says, "they tempted Christ;" consequently he is "the most high God." Psalm lxxviii. 56, and 1 Cor. x. 9. Isaiah had a vision, concerning which he says, "Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." Isaiah vi. 6. St. John, speaking

of that vision, says, "these things said Esaias, when he saw his (CHRIST'S) glory, and spake of him." John xii. 41; from whence it follows, that Jesus is the LORD OF HOSTS. And let it be carefully observed, that the name LORD, or JEHOVAH, which signifies the essence of God, is never, upon any occasion, given to a creature. Yet this name is given to Jesus Christ, as in the text last mentioned; and also in the following, Jer. xxiii. 6. "This is the name whereby he shall be called, the LORD (that is JEHOVAH) our righteousness." Now, who is the righteousness of believers? Every Christian^e knows, that "Christ is made unto us—righteousness." And in Isaiah xliii. "I, even I, am the Lord, and besides me there is no Savior." But we know who alone is the Savior of the world, even "our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." But unless he were God as well as man, he could be no Savior; for Jehovah says there is no Savior besides himself.* Passing by many more texts for want of room, we shall mention but one more in proof of our Lord's divinity. Our Savior has graciously promised his presence with all his people whenever they assemble together. See Matt. xviii. 20. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Now how is it possible for Christ to be present in all the thousands of places where Christians are assembled, unless he be the true God?

In like manner might we show that the peculiar names of the Deity are given to the *Holy Spirit*, and that, therefore, he also is a Person, and a divine person. One, out of many, may be sufficient. St. Peter, reproving Ananias for the lie he had told respecting his substance, saith, Acts v. 3, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie unto the HOLY GHOST?" and, in the next verse, he adds, "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto GOD." This is a most plain and undeniable proof that the Holy Ghost is God.†

The ordinance of *Christian baptism* af-

* If the reader wishes to see more proofs of this kind, let him consult the following places: Is. viii. 13, 14. with 1 Peter ii. 7, 8. Is. xlv. 6. with Rev. xxii. 13. Luke i. 76. with Matt. xi. 10. 2 Cor. v. 19. John xiv. 11. Is. ix. 6. Rev. i. 8. 1 Kings viii. 39. with Rev. ii. 23. And as to those places in which Christ saith, The Father is greater than I, &c. they are understood as his human nature and office, or, as the creed expresses it, "inferior to the Father as touching his manhood."

† Other proofs may be found in Acts xiii. 2. 4. 2 Tim. iii. 16. compared with 2 Pet. i. 21. 1 Cor. xii. 16. with 1 Cor. vi. 19. 1 Cor. ii. 11. 41. Psalm cxxxix. 7

fords another proof of the Trinity. In the baptism of our Lord himself, a voice from heaven said—"This is my beloved Son;" also, "The Holy Spirit descended visibly," in the manner and form of a dove, "lighting upon him." Matt. iii. 16. Here was the Trinity. The FATHER testifieth to the Son, and the SPIRIT descendeth upon him. Hence, the primitive Christians used the saying, to any who doubted the truth of this doctrine, "Go to Jordan, and you will see the Trinity." Plainer still is this truth from the form of words appointed to be used in Christian baptism—Baptize them in the name of the FATHER, and of the SON, and of the HOLY GHOST. This is an ordinance of initiation; it stands as it were at the threshold of Christianity; so that in taking upon us this distinguishing badge of the Christian profession, we avow this great doctrine. We are baptized into the *name* of each divine Person, that is, by the *authority* of each, and into the *faith, worship, and profession* of each equally and alike, as the One God of the Christian religion. Hereby we profess the Trinity, that is, one God in three Persons, in opposition to all false gods and false worship, and thereby dedicate ourselves to them, according to their personal relations; to the *Father*, as our Creator, and as reconciled in Christ; to *Christ* as our Redeemer, to deliver us from the guilt and power of sin; and to the *Holy Spirit*, to teach, comfort, and sanctify us. This is a kind of proof of the doctrine suited to the weakest capacity. Each of the sacred Three is mentioned distinctly, and by name, which certainly implies a distinction of persons; yet they are all united in the same ordinance of baptism, which shows their equality and unity. So that all who would renounce that sacred ordinance, may see in it a full, clear, and satisfactory proof of the Trinity.

Much the same may be said of the Apostolical benediction, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, Amen." In these words St. Paul prayed for the Corinthians, and in the same words almost all Christian ministers pray for their people at the close of every public service. It is a kind of prayer to each divine person singly, expressing a desire that the people may partake of the grace of Christ, who is "full of grace," through whose mediation we are reconciled to God—that they may also enjoy the love of God, namely, of God the Father, which is the source of

our whole salvation, manifested in the gift of his Son, his Spirit, and his Word—and, finally, that they may partake of the Holy Ghost, as all real Christians do in his application to their souls of all the blessings of salvation, proceeding from the Father, and flowing to us through the Son. And thus are we continually reminded of this great truth, and led also to make a practical use of it, in seeking from each of the divine persons the peculiar blessings that each, in the economy of the covenant, has undertaken to bestow.

APPLICATION.

FROM what has been said, however briefly, it is sufficiently evident, that the Doctrine of the Trinity is a *scriptural* doctrine; and as such we are bound to receive it, unless we renounce our Bibles. It is true, that it is a sublime and mysterious doctrine; yet there is nothing at all in it contrary to reason. Some men make a great outcry against it. They tell us it is absolutely impossible *that there should be but one*, and that the Trinitarians must believe there are *three Gods*. In answer to this we say, we do not affirm that the *three are one*, in the same sense that there are *three*. They are *three* in one respect, *one* in another. We say they are *three in person*; *one in essence*. We affirm that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are not three Gods, but one God. We have abundantly proved from Scripture, that there are Three to whom divine names are given, divine attributes ascribed, and divine offices assigned; and we affirm, with our text, and according to the whole tenor of Scripture, and the voice of reason too, that there are three in one. And what is there in all this absurd or contradictory?—Were we to affirm that they are one, in the same respect as they are three, it would, no doubt, be a contradiction in terms; we say not that three persons are one person, or three Gods are one God; but we say that the three persons are one God. This is revealed, therefore we believe it; and though we cannot fully comprehend it, we think it becomes such weak and fallible creatures as ourselves, humbly to receive it, with other truths, as the word of God, and not of man.

But it is by no means enough merely to assent to the doctrine; we ought to make a practical use of it. It is far from being a matter of speculation; it is a branch of our "most holy faith." We should be concerned not to hold this, or any other truth, in unrighteousness: and no doctrine, how-

ever true and important, will avail us, without an experience of its sanctifying power on our hearts.

Let us be concerned then, as perishing sinners, to apply to each of the divine persons; to the Father, for the pardon of our sins, through his infinite love and free mercy; to the Son, for an interest in his blood, righteousness, and intercession; and to the Holy Spirit, for his illuminating, sanctifying, quickening, and influencing comforts.

Let us adore and praise the eternal Three; the Father, for his electing love, and the unspeakable gift of that love, the Lord Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son. Let us adore and praise the dear Redeemer, ascribing blessing, and honor, and glory, and praise to him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. Let us adore and praise the Holy Spirit for his gracious influences, accompanying the word of truth, whereby we knew ourselves, and felt the power of the Gospel to our salvation. Thus shall we resemble the blessed angels, who are incessantly praising the glorious Trinity, and crying, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

We shall close the whole with that excellent Collect used by the Episcopal Church on Trinity Sunday.

"Almighty and everlasting God, who hast given unto us, thy servants, grace, by the confession of a true faith, to acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the divine Majesty to worship the Unity; we beseech thee that thou wouldest keep us stedfast in this faith, and evermore defend us from all adversities, who livest and reignest One God, world without end. Amen."

PRAYER.—WE praise thee, O God, we acknowledge thee to be the Lord. The gods of the heathens are vanity and a lie. Thou art the only living and true God. Jehovah our God is one Jehovah. We will worship the Lord our God, and him only will we serve.

We desire, O God, to receive with humble faith, all that thy holy word reveals concerning thine incomprehensible nature. Truly, O Lord, thou art highly exalted above all blessings and praise, and above all the thoughts of finite creatures. Who, by searching, can find out God? who can find out the Almighty to perfection? Such knowledge is too wonderful for us; it is high, we cannot attain unto it. We adore the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the one God of our salvation. Glory be unto the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost!

And while we worship the Triune Jehovah, we pray to partake of those spiritual and eternal blessings which proceed from a covenant-God. O may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all! Amen.

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SERMON XXXIV.

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL.

Romans i. 16.—I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

If we wisely consider the signs of the times, we are constrained to say, "this is a day of rebuke and blasphemy." Knowledge increases; arts and sciences flourish; commerce is extended; almost every thing is in a state of improvement—but what shall we say of religion? Alas, how many among us content themselves with the mere name and the shadow of it, while they deny its power! How many others, still more careless, neglect even the form of godliness: while others, grown bolder in sin, are weary of the Gospel itself; dispute its truth; revile its power; and are seated in the chair of the scorner: in a word, are "ashamed of the Gospel of Christ."

Not so that great and good man, whose words we have read. He was a bold and successful minister of the Gospel. He had preached it in many countries, but hitherto had no opportunity of preaching it at Rome; but hearing that there were Christians even there, he sends them this letter, expresses his love to their souls, and his earnest desire to come and preach Christ's Gospel there. It was a great and populous city, one of the greatest in the world, and he well knew he should meet with much opposition, and perhaps be in danger of his life; yet he says, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ," adding this good reason for his boldness, "for it is the power of God to salvation," to every believer, whether Jew or Gentile—Now, that it may, by the blessing of God, be so to us, let us,

I. Take a general view of the *nature* of the Gospel.

II. Consider the important *design* and *use* of it—it is "the power of God to salvation;" and then,

III. Show that there is no reason why we should be *ashamed* of it, but rather that we ought to *glory* in it.

I. Let us take a general view of the *nature* of the Gospel. What is the Gospel? what do we mean by it? It may be feared that many who are called Christians would be at a loss for an answer to this question. Now there are several points of view in which we may behold the Gospel. It certainly contains a history of the most remarkable and important events, especially

the incarnation of the Son of God, his holy and spotless life, his amazing miracles, his excellent sermons, his bloody passion and cruel death, his resurrection from the grave, and his ascension to glory. The Gospel also contains *the purest and best system of morals* that was ever offered to the world; and would to God they were but practised. The Gospel likewise displays *the infinite perfections of God*, his holiness, justice, and love especially; for "he who was in the bosom of the Father hath declared him." The Gospel demands our attention also, as it affords a wonderful discovery of a future state, an eternal heaven and hell, in one of which each of us must soon be fixed for ever. In all these respects the Gospel discovers and requires our serious and cordial regard.

But all this falls infinitely short of the true nature of the Gospel. The word *Gospel*, in the original, signifies, *Good news*, or *Glad tidings*, as it is written in the prophet, Isa. lii. 7, and quoted by St. Paul, Rom. x. 15. "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" Observe, glad tidings of good things. This is a just description of the Gospel; never were there things so good as those contained in the Gospel; never were there tidings so glad, as those reported by the Gospel. You are to consider the Gospel as a message of mercy from God to sinners—as a declaration of his good-will to lost and ruined man. Take it in Christ's own words—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Or, take it in the words of St. Paul, "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." Now you will observe in these texts, the condition of those to whom these glad tidings are sent, a world of men ready to perish, and who must have perished, if God had not sent his Son to save them. They are sinners whom Christ came to save. My friends, we can never rightly understand one word of the Gospel, unless we know and feel our miserable and perishing estate as sinners. In Adam we all fell. From him we derive a sinful nature. Our minds are total darkness, as to God, and the things which belong to our peace. Our hearts are disaffected to God: we shun him; we fly from him, as Adam did when he had sinned. And, as to our *lives*, they are lives of rebellion against him. Our carnal minds are "enmity against God, they are not subject to the

law of God, neither can they be," till renewed by grace. And being breakers of the holy law, we are under the curse and penalty of it; obnoxious to the divine wrath, and liable, every minute, to death and damnation.

Now, do we know this; do we believe this; do we feel and lament that this is our case; and does this lead us to cry out, in good earnest, "Men and brethren, what must we do to be saved?" If so, we are prepared to receive the good news of the Gospel. To such persons, especially, is the word of this salvation sent. It informs them that God, in his infinite mercy to sinful man, has sent his only begotten Son to take our nature; and in this nature, and as our surety, to obey the laws which we had broken; to make an atonement, or satisfaction for sin, by his death, and so reconcile us to God. And also, that he will give his Holy Spirit to his people, by whose influences accompanying the Gospel, their minds shall be enlightened in the knowledge of the truth; they shall be enabled to believe in Jesus; to repent of their sins after a godly sort; and to become new creatures, so as to love, obey, and enjoy him here, and at length to be made perfectly happy in heaven for ever.

And is not this good news? So the first Christians thought. When Philip went down to Samaria, and "preached Christ" there, we are told "there was great joy in that city." When the Galatians first heard a Gospel preacher, they received him "as an angel of God, even as Jesus Christ; and had it been possible, they would have plucked out their eyes, and have given them to him;" such was the blessedness they then enjoyed. And when the poor heathen jailer of Philippi was brought to the saving knowledge of Christ, he "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." And so it will be with us, in some measure, if we are sensible of our need of Christ, and if we heartily receive this good news. If an army of rebels, subdued in war, and at the will of their conqueror, were doomed to death, would it not fill their hearts with joy to be told that the king, for the sake of his son, had freely pardoned them all, and received them to his favor, and would never more remember their offence? Or if a company of miserable prisoners, in such a place as the French bastille, or the Spanish inquisition, who had endured all the horrors of a rigorous confinement for many years, were to hear the sound of liberty and freedom, would it not gladden their very souls? Such are the "glad ti-

dings of great joy," which the Gospel brings to this present company to-day; and such will be their effect too, if you believe to the saving of your souls.

And this, you will perceive, is a very different scheme from that of those, who tell us, that if we are but sincere, and do as well as we can, God is merciful, and we need not fear; and who make no more of Christ than a good man, who came to teach good things, and to set us a good example, and to assure us that God will accept our repentance and sincere obedience, instead of that which his law requires. Beware of this merely moral scheme; it will be poison to your souls. If Paul had taught only morality, he need not have said, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." The philosophers of Rome would have made no objection to it; but it was the satisfaction of Christ, the sacrifice of Christ, the righteousness of Christ, which they despised. The cross was the stumbling-block of the Jews, and the barrier of the Gentiles. But nothing deserves the name of Gospel, which does not make a precious Jesus "all in all," "the first and the last," in our whole salvation. Therefore, when the salvation began to be corrupted by false teachers, who told them they must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, besides believing in Christ, St. Paul cried out aloud against the motley mixture of Christ's righteousness and man's righteousness; he called it *another Gospel*, and protested against it, saying, "If any man preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." We are now to consider,

II. The important *design* and *use* of the Gospel—it is the *power* of God unto salvation, that is, it is the powerful instrument which God employs, and makes effectual to the salvation of believing sinners.

Salvation is the grand object which God has in view in the Gospel. Salvation is a great word, but a greater thing. Nothing so great, nothing so important, as the salvation of a soul that must be happy or miserable for ever. And it is sad to think that poor thoughtless mortals should ever use such a word in a light and profane manner. What is more common than to hear a person say—As I hope to be saved! And what notion have such people of salvation? They only hope that, when they die, "they shall not go down to hell, a place of fire and torment; but that they shall go up to heaven, to some fine un-

known shining place above the skies, where they shall be free from all pain and uneasiness." Poor ignorant creatures! they have no desire to be saved from sin, neither the guilt nor the power of it; no desire to have their hearts changed, their nature refined, and their souls filled with the love of Christ. But the salvation proposed in the Gospel is great and glorious beyond description; the greatest blessing that God can bestow, or man receive. And it is by the Gospel that he conveys this blessing. Wise men in all ages have seen the need of some remedy for human nature in its miserable and fallen state. Philosophers and Lawgivers have tried their skill in vain. They were physicians of no value. The Gospel provides the only medicine for the cure of the soul, and this is effectual. It is God's power to salvation. It is the powerful mean, in the hand of the Spirit, to save us from the guilt of sin, and to give us a right to heaven; and to save us from the power of sin, and make us fit for heaven.

1. It is the power of God with respect to the pardon of our sins, and the justification of our persons. Without the Gospel, we could never have been sure that the great God would pardon a sinner; we could never have known on what terms he would do it. We should never have been certain that we were actually in a state of favor. But the Gospel is a message from God himself, assuring us not only that "there is forgiveness with him," but inviting us to apply for it, and accept of it. The Gospel is "the ministry of reconciliation, namely, That God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." God has appointed and accepted the mediation and sacrifice of his Son, for the satisfaction of his law and justice, and making peace; so that he might not charge any sin, or inflict any punishment, upon those who believe, or receive the atonement. Upon this ground, the ministers of the Gospel, as ambassadors for Christ, pray and beseech sinners to be reconciled to God. Since satisfaction is actually made to the justice of God by the death of his Son, that he may honorably show favors to sinners, they entreat them, by these gracious encouragements, to throw down their arms of rebellion, to submit to mercy in God's own way, and to yield themselves up to him without reserve, that everlasting peace and friendship may be established.

That this is the principal design of the text appears from the next verse. "For in the Gospel is the righteousness of God,

by faith, revealed to faith," the righteousness of Christ, which becomes ours by faith, is revealed to be believed on, and trusted in. Now, God makes this Gospel his power to salvation. This is the doctrine which he owns and blesses. By the power of his Spirit, he opens the understanding to receive it, and the heart to believe it. Thus the sinner comes to God, is accepted, and saved.

2. It is the power of God with respect to the renewing our spirit, restoring the image of God in our souls, subduing our sins, and forming us to "that holiness, without which no man can see the Lord." It was as much the design of Christ to save us from sin, as to save us from hell. We are to esteem it a precious part of his salvation to be delivered from the slavery of the devil, and the tyranny of our native corruptions. The doctrine of "salvation, by grace, through faith," is so far from being contrary to holiness, or hurtful in good works, that it is God's powerful instrument of producing them. The Gospel of Jesus Christ contains the purest precepts in the world. The instructions of Christ to his disciples contain the noblest morality, infinitely finer than all that the Heathen sages ever knew. The Gospel also furnishes us with motives to obedience, infinitely stronger than any other. Here sin appears to be sinful indeed, especially in the agonies and sufferings of Jesus. Here holiness appears with heavenly beauty, in the character and conduct of our dear Redeemer. Here we are forcibly drawn by the love of Christ, who requires, as a proof of our love to him, that we keep his commandments. He expects all his followers to resemble him. He requires them to deny themselves and take up their cross daily; to mortify the deeds of the body; to part with sin, though as dear as a right hand or a right eye; to set their affections on things above; to be fervent in their devotions to God; to abound in every good word and work; to be honest and just in all their actions; to be charitable to the poor and needy; to visit the sick, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked; in a word, "to love our neighbor as ourselves."

Nor does the Gospel only require such holy dispositions and actions, but it enables believers to attain and perform them. By the same faith, which receives Christ as our righteousness, we are united to him, (for without him we can do nothing) and by virtue of union to him we can do all things. As the branch derives virtue from the tree to bear fruit, so believers receive,

"out of the fullness of Christ, grace for grace," so that they bring forth the fruits of righteousness and goodness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory of God the Father.

3. The salvation of God, thus begun, shall be perfected in glory. Grace is the bud of glory. Even now, the heirs of heaven have a foretaste of heaven. They have the Spirit of God, who is the *Seal* and the *Earnest*. "Hereby," saith St. John, "know we that we dwell in God, and he in us," because he hath given us of his Spirit. This is the great evidence, the great ground of assurance, that we are in a state of salvation; and that we have everlasting life: and having the earnest, we may depend upon the full possession. What a source of consolation is this, in all the troubles of this miserable world! Here only is an antidote to death. And this is enough. If sin be pardoned, death cannot hurt us. The sting of death is sin, but Christ has extracted the sting. Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Soon shall the believer be delivered from all the trials of the present state. The separated spirit shall be with Christ: and the mortal body shall be raised a glorious body. "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of the Father." And thus, you see, the Gospel is the power of God, to present and eternal salvation. And is this a thing to be ashamed of? God forbid. This is what we were in the third and last place to prove, namely, that,

III. There is no reason why we should be ashamed of the Gospel, but rather that we ought to glory in it.

Shame is a very powerful passion. It was introduced by sin, and should be applied to nothing else. But it is the misery of our fallen nature, that we "glory in our shame," and are ashamed of our glory. Wicked men are not ashamed of sin, but they are ashamed of that Gospel which would save them from sin. Through the temptations of the devil, and the ignorance, pride, and carnality of the human heart, true religion has always been accounted a shameful thing, so that it has always required a holy boldness to make an open profession of it. But let us see what it is that makes men ashamed of the Gospel, and whether there be any good reason for being so.

1. Some are ashamed of the Gospel, because it is chiefly poor and mean people who profess it. This was an objection made by the Pharisees to our Savior himself—"Have any of the Rulers, or of the

Pharisees, believed on him?" The meanness of Christ's outward appearance, and that of his followers, was a stumbling-block to the Jews. But there is nothing solid in this objection. The design of God in the Gospel is to humble the pride of man, and therefore "he hath chosen the foolish, weak, base, and despised things of the world, to confound the things that are wise, mighty, and honorable, that no flesh should glory in his presence." Christ rejoiced that "the poor had the Gospel preached unto them," and that "divine things were revealed unto babes."

2. Some are ashamed of the Gospel, because it is, as they pretend, foolish and irrational, such as none but weak and ignorant people can embrace. So the Greeks, who were learned and wise, accounted it at first. So many, who are "wise in their own conceit," now reckon it. They pretend that there are mysteries in it which cannot be understood, such as the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, Regeneration, the Resurrection, &c. To this we answer, there are mysteries in nature, which the wisest man cannot explain, and is it any wonder that there should be mysteries in religion, especially that God, who is an infinite Spirit, should be above our comprehension? It is true, that there are many things in the Gospel *above* our reason, but we defy any man to prove that there is one thing *contrary* to reason. Besides, it should be remembered, that man is a fallen creature: that the thoughts of his heart are evil continually; that "the natural man (the animal or rational man) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Hence we see that reason, though a noble gift of God, is insufficient to guide us in matters of religion: and he who would be saved, must humble himself as a little child, and pray to be taught of God. But,

3. The true and greatest cause why many are ashamed of the Gospel is, that it requires a holy life; it requires a separation from the world; the denial of self; the mortification of sin. It will not allow a man to live like a brute, in the indulgence of his carnal lusts. It requires a life of faith, repentance, devotion; in a word, Christ says to every professor of his religion, "Give me thine heart." Now, while a man remains in his natural state, he loves the world, he loves sin, and his heart is enmity against God: "he loves darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil."

But this holy tendency of the Gospel is

so far from being an objection to it, that we should prize it on this very account; this proves it came from God, and on this account, St. Paul gloried in it. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I am crucified to the world."

APPLICATION.

AND now, men and brethren, suffer the word of exhortation. Has God, in his infinite mercy, sent us this glorious Gospel? then let us be very thankful for it, and very attentive to it. Let it be the study of our lives, and the delight of our hearts. Nothing so justly demands, nothing can so well require, our best regard, as this. It is God's greatest and best gift to a lost world.—And he takes particular notice how we receive it. O let us beware of neglecting it. Angels desire to look into these things; and shall not we study them diligently, who are so much more interested in them? Compared with the Gospel, all other books are waste paper. Compared with the Gospel tidings, all other news is trifling. This alone can teach us how we may be pardoned and sanctified; this alone can secure our happiness in time and eternity.

We have now heard that the Gospel is the *power* of God, it is that which he works by, and renders effectual to the salvation—of whom? To whom is this Gospel the powerful instrument of salvation? It is only to them that believe. Let infidels tremble; they, alas! have no part nor lot in this matter. Faith begins in an *assent*, a cordial assent, to the truth of the Gospel. It is received as a divine testimony. The believer sets his seal to it that it is true. Faith proceeds to *affiance* or trust in Christ. "He first gives a firm assent to the Gospel; then cordially accepts its blessings; from a conviction that the doctrine is true, he passes to a persuasion that the privileges are his own." The believer then cleaves inseparably to Christ, depends incessantly on Christ. Gladly does he renounce all dependence on himself, all ideas of human merit; he flies to this refuge, there he is safe; he builds on this foundation, and he shall never be removed. This done, sweet peace takes possession of his conscience; hope enlivens his breast; love warms his heart; zeal fires his soul; and he cries, "Dearest Savior, I am thine. Henceforth I will follow thee. I will serve thee all my days on earth, and I desire to be with thee for ever in heaven."

And are any ashamed of this Gospel; a

Gospel so wise, so holy, so honorable to God, so safe to man? Let them be ashamed of it, who never knew its nature, who never felt its power. No man can be ashamed of it, if it be the power of God to his soul. No; "he that believeth hath the witness, or testimony in himself;" he can give a reason of the hope that is in him. And being baptized unto Christ, he will not be "ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end." And O, beware! beware, young people, lest any seduce you from the faith, by the pride of reason, and the sophistry of wicked men. Ever be on your guard, and remember those awful words of Christ—"Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall also the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Finally, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from all iniquity. As we must not be ashamed of the Gospel, neither let us be a shame to it. Many are too much prejudiced against the Bible, even to read it; but they love to read the lives of professors. Let them see the Holy Gospel transcribed in our daily walk. So shall we adorn and recommend it to the world, and constrain them to say that Christianity is all divine.

PRAYER.—O THAT the Gospel of Christ may be the power of God to our salvation! To this end, be pleased, O Lord, to grant that every one here present, may truly and heartily believe it, embrace it, and hold it fast.

We praise thee for the ministry of reconciliation, for the glorious truth that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. We thank thee, that, in thy great condescension and compassion, thou hast sent thy Messenger to invite us to be reconciled to thee. Be thou, gracious God, for Jesus' sake, reconciled to us.

We also entreat thee to subdue our iniquities. Let them not have dominion over us. Create in us a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within us.

Save us, O Lord, from the folly and guilt of being ashamed of thee and of thy word. Help us patiently to submit to all the reproaches which may come upon us for an attachment to thy truth; and grant, that instead of being ashamed of the Gospel, we may be so thoroughly satisfied, from happy experience, of its transcendent excellency, that in the face of a scoffing world we may say with thy servant Paul, God forbid that we should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ: and O that, in the last great day, when the enemies of the Savior shall be ashamed before him, it may be our unspeakable happiness to be owned by him as his disciples and friends!

SERMON XXXV.

SIN AND DEATH, OR GRACE AND LIFE.

Romans viii. 13. If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

THESE words set before us, *LIFE* and *DEATH*;—*eternal* life, or *eternal* death: they plainly show us what will be the eternal consequence of a life of sin, or of a state of grace; and therefore it is of the greatest importance to us clearly to understand them, in order that we may know what will be our future portion. "It is a question," said an old divine, "you ought seriously to put to yourselves, Shall I be saved, or Shall I be damned? If you have any spark of conscience left, when you are sick, or dying, you will put it with an anxious and trembling heart. Poor soul, whither art thou going? It is better, my friends, to put this question now, while you have opportunity to correct your error, if hitherto you have been wrong. And nothing will sooner determine it than this text. "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die," &c. These words contain two things, which I shall express in two plain sentences.

I. If sin *live* in us, we must *die* eternally, and

II. If sin *die* in us, we shall *live* eternally.

I. If sin *live* in us, we shall *die*; that is, if it reign and rule; "If we live after the flesh, we shall die."

By the *flesh*, we are to understand human nature in its present fallen state. Man is made up of two parts, body and soul, or flesh and spirit, but man is now called flesh, because the spirit is dead to God, and he lives only a fleshly or animal life. So God spake of the wicked world before the flood, Gen. vi. 3. "And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man," that is by the good counsels and faithful warnings of Noah and others, "for that he also is flesh"—incurably corrupt, carnal and sensual; sunk into the mire of sin, and fleshly lusts. This is still the case of all men before they receive the grace of God—they are flesh. They take their name from that part which rules, which is the flesh, and not the spirit:—they are wholly engaged by things which concern the body and its sensual delights. Hence it is that the mind itself is called *carnal* or *fleshly*, ver. 5, 6. "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be

carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." This bad turn of mind is called *flesh*, because it exerts itself by means of the senses and members of the body; for carnal men "yield their members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity, unto iniquity," Rom. vi. 19. Habits and practices of uncleanness and iniquity are like tyrannical lords and masters, which rule over sinners, to whom they have resigned the members of their bodies, and the affections of their minds.

Now, to *live after the flesh*, is to obey the dictates and orders of our corrupt nature; to gratify its sinful desires, without regard to the will of God, yea, in direct contradiction to his will. And this will appear more plainly by considering the *actions*, the *words*, and the *thoughts* of a carnal man.

Take a view, in the first place, of his *actions*. Among these the Apostle, Gal. v. 19, mentions "Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanness," &c. These are abominations to which corrupt nature is strongly inclined. The world is full of pollution through lust. In youth, especially, these sins are predominant; and "it is a shame even to speak of the things that are done in secret." And however lightly the sins of uncleanness may be thought of in general, we are assured by the Scriptures, that "whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." *Drunkenness* is another work of the flesh. Fools make a mock at this sin also, but St. Paul declares, 1 Cor. vi. 10, that "drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God." It is very common for a person to promise himself security in this sin, and to say, "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst;" but what does God say in this case? "The Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man." Deut. xxix. 19. The *profane* man also lives after the flesh. What can be a plainer proof that man is destitute of the fear of God, than his daring to set the Most High at defiance, and wantonly and wickedly to take his awful name in vain? The Sabbath-breaker lives after the flesh;—the man who, having no regard to the authority of God, no love to his service, and no care for his own soul, dares to spend the sacred hours of the Lord's day in worldly business, idleness, and pleasure. The conduct of the Sabbath-breaker proves, in a dreadful manner, that he is flesh, and as much a stranger to the life of God in the soul as the beasts

that perish. "Let no man, then, deceive himself with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."

But it is not only by these grossly immoral actions that men appear to live after the flesh; a man's speech betrayeth him. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." We have already mentioned cursing and swearing, on account of which our land mourneth. Equally carnal is the corrupt communication which proceedeth out of the mouth; that "filthiness, foolish talking, and jesting, which are not convenient." O how is the tongue, the glory of man, debased by cursing, lying, slandering, evil speaking, lewd songs, and wanton speeches. "The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; it defileth our members, and is set on fire of hell." James iii. 6. The conversation of carnal men is wholly carnal. They can talk fluently for hours together upon worldly subjects, but let the things of God be introduced, the company is struck dumb! natural men can find nothing to say to God, or to one another, on the great and glorious subjects of salvation and eternal life.

But we must go a step further. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so he is." A man must be judged of by his prevailing, chosen, and delightful thoughts. "Out of the heart," said our Lord, "proceed evil thoughts." A good man may have bad thoughts, but a bad man, a natural man cannot have good thoughts. A good man hates vain, wicked, lewd, or blasphemous thoughts; but a wicked man loves, cherishes, and delights in them. It is said of the wicked, "God is not in all his thoughts." He rises in the morning without any thoughts of God. He goes about his business without any thoughts of him. He sits down to his table, and rises from it, without any thoughts of him.—And he goes to rest, like a beast, in the same manner. Thus it is said in verse 5, of this chapter—"they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh"—they are *carnally minded*; they constantly and habitually consult and relish, pursue, and delight in only worldly, sensual, and sinful things, such as are agreeable to their carnal and unrenewed appetites. And this may serve to convince some persons, how much they deceive themselves respecting their true state before God. They flatter themselves that they shall be saved, because they are not so wicked as others; but they have never noticed the prevailing bent and inclination of their minds. They are not drunkards, or swearers, or liars;

"but they mind earthly things;" and St. John assures us, that "if we love the world, the love of the Father is not in us." Doubtless, there is a necessary, lawful, and commendable regard to our proper callings, and worldly affairs, and there is a lawful enjoyment of worldly comforts; but the evil lies in this, so to love the world as to make it our portion, our chief good; to love the world more than God, who does not reckon himself to be loved sincerely, unless he be loved *supremely*, "with all our heart, and soul, and strength." The love of God and the love of the world are like the two scales of a balance, as the one rises the other falls; and let every man ask himself how it is with him. O how little place have the blessed God, the precious Redeemer, the Holy Spirit, the care of the soul, the duties of religion, or the concerns of eternity, in the hearts of natural men! The thoughts of these things are seldom entertained, and then they are not welcomed. They are a burden and a task; and the mind, when forced to regard them, dislikes them, and springs from them again into worldly matters with delight, as a fish into the water, which is its own proper element.

Now, sirs, as you love your souls, mark the consequence of living after the flesh—"If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die! Dreadful words, "Ye shall die!" "To be carnally minded is death." It is a kind of death in itself. The carnal man is now dead to God; "dead while he liveth:" "dead in trespasses and sins." And "the wages of sin is death." Not only the death of the body, which is the separation of the soul from it; but the death of soul and body too, in their everlasting separation from God, the fountain of all happiness. "This is the second death," as it comes after that of the body, and is inexpressibly more terrible; and shall never end in a resurrection to eternal life. At present, God exercises much patience towards his enemies. His sun shines, and his rain descends, both on good and bad men. He gives them time and space for repentance, to which his merciful goodness ought to lead them. But when all these have proved in vain, and the man has persisted in his carnal course to the end of life, then God will withdraw all his favors; his mercy indeed will be clean gone for ever, and he will be favorable no more. And O, woe, woe, woe, to the man from whom God departs, and to whom he will say, "Depart from me, ye cursed."

All this is the natural and necessary consequence of living after the flesh.

What else could be reasonably expected? There are but two eternal states for men after this life. Every man is training up for one of these. The carnal man is unfit for heaven. There he cannot come; for all the joys and employments of the blessed are spiritual. Delighting in God, loving God, praising God, are the charming employments of the redeemed. But the carnal man well knows that he has no relish for these things; and he could not be happy in heaven, were he admitted there. What then must be his portion? There is no other place for him but hell; and for this he was fitting himself all his days. He was training up in enmity against God, hardening his heart, and abusing his mercies, despising his grace, neglecting his salvation, trampling on his authority, and blaspheming his name; thus was he preparing for that horrid dungeon, where he must be the companion of men like-minded, and of devils whose dictates he obeyed. "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

O think of this, ye who live in sin! see what an enemy you have, even the flesh: an enemy within; an enemy, without which the devil might tempt and the world invite in vain. Beware, then, of indulging the flesh; it may seem to be your friend, but it is your worst foe; and, like Judas, it kisses to betray. Fly then from the allurements of sinful pleasure and sensual enjoyments. I beseech you to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; and in your turn declare war against the flesh. This indeed is a just and a necessary war; a war that shall be successful and glorious; for, as it is added in our text—"If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live;" which leads us to the second thing proposed, namely,

II. If sin *die* in us, we shall live eternally.

Here we must consider what is meant by mortifying sin—by what help we may do it; and—the blessed consequence of doing it.

To *mortify* sin is to *kill* it; to *put it to death*, as the magistrates put a felon to death, by due course of justice. He is suspected, apprehended, tried, and executed. We must first suspect ourselves and our sins. Consideration is the first step in religion. He who never suspected he was wrong, may depend upon it he is not yet right. Sin must be considered as our worst enemy; the tyrant that would enslave and destroy our souls. We must find out our sins, or "be sure they will

find us out." We must determine, by the grace of God, to destroy them, or they will destroy us. The matter must be brought to this issue, kill or be killed. You must kill sin, or it will kill you.

But how is this to be done? Sin must be *crucified*. This is the manner of killing it which God has appointed. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts." Gal. v. 24. The destruction of our sins is compared to the crucifixion of Christ, not only because it is like it, but because it proceeds from it. There is no death of sin but by the death of Christ; by virtue of it, and by interest in it.

Crucifixion is a *violent* and *painful* death; and so is the death of sin. Our sins must not be left to die of themselves. Some people, especially old people, think that they have left their sins, when the fact is, their sins have left them, or one sin has left them to make room for another. Sin must be seized, though in the height of its health and power; seized as a thief or murderer who breaks into your house. It may be very painful to mortify the deeds of the body. Jesus Christ compares it to cutting off a right hand, or plucking out a right eye, but he says, this is better than going to hell with two hands or two eyes. It may be very hard to break off from old sins, but it *must* be done; and, by the grace of God, it *may* be done.

Crucifixion is a *scandalous death*. Only the worst of slaves and criminals were put to death in this manner. So the Christian, who, through the Spirit, mortifies the deeds of the body, puts off the old man of sin, and puts on the Lord Jesus Christ, may expect to be despised as his Savior was. The world will bear morality, but it hates holiness. Religion has generally borne some nickname. Formerly they called pious men *Puritans*, as if it were a scandalous thing to be purified from the pollutions of the world; and now they call religious people *enthusiasts*, as if it were shameful to pursue the methods which God himself prescribes. But "he that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution."

Crucifixion is a *slow* and *lingering* death. Our Lord was several hours on the cross; and some have been as many days. So sin dies slowly. Mortifying the deeds of the body is a constant act; to be continued as long as we live. The best believer cannot say sin is dead, but he can bless God that sin is dying. It is nailed to the cross; has received some mortal wounds; it is gradually weakening; and,

ere long, God will send death to give the finishing stroke, and the believer shall shout *Victory*, saying, Blessed be God, who hath delivered me from this body of sin and death; I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord.

But, by what means, or by what help, may we effectually mortify sin? Our text says, "Through the Spirit"—by the gracious aid and influence of the Holy Spirit, enabling us to do it. "Without me," said Christ, "ye can do nothing:" and experience proves it true. How many poor souls have been sensible of the error of their ways, at times alarmed about their sins, and have resolved to forsake them, and lead a new life! but knowing nothing of their own weakness or of Christ's strength, they have "resolved, and re-resolved, and died the same." To as little purpose have others said many prayers, fasted certain days, denied themselves the comforts of life, or submitted to the painful penance of Popish priests. The power of sin was not lessened; the principle of sin was not weakened; the practice of sin was not prevented. When the sense of sin was worn off, and the fears of hell abated, they "returned like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

"A young gentleman, whose sensual lusts were extremely violent, procured an entire female skull; and every morning before he went out, spent some minutes in surveying it; expecting that the sight of so displeasing an object would operate as an antidote to the power of that temptation to which he was so subject. But, alas, his corrupt inclination still prevailed, and he sinned as frequently as ever. So he gave away the skull, finding it did him no service. Afterwards God was pleased to convert him; and vital grace did that for him, which a dead skull was unable to effect. His easy besetting sin had no more dominion over him from the day that the Holy Ghost laid effectual hold on his heart."

We must first *have* the Spirit, that we may experience his sanctifying power. Having the Spirit, makes all the difference between a true Christian and a man of the world; for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." There is nothing in the flesh, or corrupt nature, that can crucify the flesh, or prevent its corrupt actings. Something of a nature directly contrary to it must be added, and that is a new and divine principle, implanted by regeneration; for "that which is born of the

Spirit is Spirit." The regenerated person is a spiritual person, possessed of a principle like its author; and this principle acts according to its spiritual nature, in spiritual duties, and particularly, in this, the mortification of sin.

The Spirit helps us to mortify sin, by enabling us to discover it, and by showing us its hateful and abominable nature; filling our souls with a sincere dislike to it, and a holy determination to destroy it. He takes away the stony, insensible heart, and gives us an heart of flesh, an heart to mourn for sin, an heart to oppose sin, an heart to watch against sin, and shun the first approaches towards it.

But especially he helps us to mortify sin, by giving us faith, and leading us to Christ for pardon, righteousness, and strength. In the first verse of this chapter it is said—"there is no condemnation to them which are *in Christ Jesus*," and then it follows, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Many of the Jews "followed after righteousness, but they did not attain it. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law: for they stumbled at the stumbling stone." Let us beware of stumbling in the same manner. Faith in Christ is the chief instrument for killing sin. Behold, the Lamb of God, bleeding and dying, not only to take away the guilt of sin, that it may not condemn, but the power of sin also, that it may not prevail. "Sin shall not have dominion over thee, believer, for thou art not under the law, but under grace." See, flowing from the wounded side of the crucified Lord, blood and water; blood to pardon, water to cleanse. It was the design of the dear Redeemer "to destroy the works of the devil;" "to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." The Lord Jesus having thus designed the death of sin in believers by his own death, is ready to apply the power of it for that purpose, to all who believe in him. Come then, by faith, to Jesus; tell him of the power of thy sins, and of thy inability to destroy them; plead the fullness that is in him for thy supply; beseech him to subdue thine iniquities, and leave the matter in his hands. His grace is sufficient for thee; his strength shall be perfected in thy weakness. Expect his help. His power, his grace, his faithfulness, are all engaged for thine assistance, and thou shalt not apply or wait in vain.

This promised help of the Spirit does not exclude the use of means on our part. The Spirit so works *in* us, as also to work

by us. The duty is ours; the grace is his. We must watch and pray lest we enter into temptation. We must remember his eye is always upon us. We must call to mind the obligations we are under, from duty, from gratitude, from baptismal and sacramental engagements; the relation we bear to Christ, to the church, and the world. We must use with moderation the comforts of life, and, instead of pampering the body, bring it under and keep it in subjection.

Thus doing, *we shall live*. There is no condemnation to persons of this character. Though they find, to their daily sorrow, "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit," they have reason to rejoice that "the Spirit lusteth against the flesh." This is an evidence that they have "passed from death unto life." They live *indeed*, for Christ liveth in them. They live to purpose, they live to God. And in this, their gradual sanctification, consists their meetness for heaven, where sin shall be all done away. O Christian, go on. Be not weary in well-doing, fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on *eternal life*.

But, O sinner, what will be the end of thy present pursuits? "The end of these things is death." Lay to heart the solemn truths you heard in the beginning of this discourse. Remember that life and death have been set before you; life, if sin be slain; death, if sin prevail. Put home then to thy conscience the important question, Am I living after the flesh, or after the Spirit? And by this you may determine your present state, and future prospects. If thou livest after the flesh, thou shalt die; that is, thou shalt be damned. And are you in love with death and destruction? Is it nothing to you that the terrors of the Almighty are sounded in your ears? Do you love your sins so well as to be damned for them? O, be wiser! "Set eternal pains against momentary pleasures. The *pleasures* of sin are but for a season, but the *pains* of sin are for evermore." And O, do not flatter yourselves that you may enjoy the pleasures of sin in this world, and yet enjoy the pleasures of heaven in another. The God who says, in our text, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die," is a God of truth; he cannot lie. "Upon the wicked he will rain fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup." Come, then, forsake the foolish and live. Wrong not your own souls. Forsake not your own mercies. Let the time past suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, and to have

served divers lusts and pleasures. Open your eyes, and behold your danger. Flee from the wrath to come. Confess your sins to God. Beseech him to pardon them; and pray for the Holy Spirit to work faith in your heart, and enable you "to mortify the deeds of the body, that you may live."

PRAYER.—WRITE these words on our hearts, we beseech thee, O Lord. Thou hast set before us life and death, the blessing and the curse. Help us to shun the road that leads to death, and to choose the narrow way that leads to everlasting life. We confess that we are by nature carnally minded, which is death: O make us spiritually minded, which is life and peace: From uncleanness, drunkenness, profanity, Sabbath-breaking, corrupt speech, and evil thoughts, good Lord, deliver us. From every thing earthly, sensual, and devilish, save us, good Lord. The time past of our life may well suffice, in which we wrought the will of the flesh. Now may we reckon ourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We offer up our supplications, O God, on behalf of those who do not join with us in these petitions. We pray for those who are following, without remorse, the devices and desires of their own hearts, who are serving divers lusts and pleasures, who are dead while they live, and are in danger of eternal death. We beseech thee, Lord, to pity them in their miserable and awful condition. No power but thine can save them; but with thee all things are possible. O let the pitifulness of thy great mercy help them; that being made free from sin, and becoming the servants of God, they may have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

SERMON XXXVI.

PARDONING MERCY.

Isaiah i. 8. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

THE pardon of sin has been justly called, *The life-blood of religion*. It is this which runs through all parts of the Scriptures, like the blood in our veins, and is the foremost object in the glorious Gospel. No man has a grain of religion, till he sees the need, and feels the want, of the pardon of his sins. No man is happy in religion, till he has reason to conclude that his sins are pardoned. Gratitude for this blessing is the grand incentive to holy obedience, and triumph on account of it forms the bliss of glorified saints: How worthy, then, is this subject of our most serious regard! We all need pardon; and *pardon* or *punishment* must be our portion.

Among the precious promises of God's word, this, in our text, is one of the chief.

And it appears the more gracious, as it follows the list of the most heinous and abominable sins charged upon the Jews. This will appear more clearly by considering the three parts of our text.

1. A CHARGE; 2. An INVITATION; and 3. A PROMISE.

1. The first thing in the text is a CHARGE implied, and more particularly expressed in the former verses of this chapter. The charge is *Sin*—sin, the most aggravated, the most horrid, the most enormous. Sins, called *scarlet* and *crimson*. The *greatness* of sin is intended by these words. *Scarlet* and *crimson* are colors far remote from *white*, which is the emblem of innocence or righteousness. The saints in glory are represented as "clothed in white robes," and "in fine linen, clean and white," which is the righteousness of the saints. But here, sinners are represented as in garments stained with blood. The bloody, murderous destructive nature of sin may be intended. Sin has slain its millions. If all the bodies of the dead were heaped up, they would form the greatest mountain in the world; and we might say—sin slew all these; "for, by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin; so that death hath passed upon all men, for that all men have sinned." Some understand by the word *scarlet*—*double dyed*—as deeply tintured by sin as possible; as when any garment has been twice dyed, first in wool, and again in the thread or piece. So great sinners are twice dyed; first in their corrupt nature, for all men are born in sin; and then dyed again in the long confirmed habits of actual transgressions.

But let us look over the particulars of this charge. Sinners are first charged with *Ingratitude*, ver. 2. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." Call a man ungrateful, and you call him all that is bad; but the ingratitude of children is the worst ingratitude. Children are under the greatest obligations to their tender parents, for food and raiment, protection and education; but if, instead of dutiful obedience and affectionate care, they return evil for good, rebellion instead of subjection, it is like fixing a dagger in a parent's heart. Such a trial David felt in the wicked conduct of his beloved son Absalom. In this manner God speaks of man's sin. God is good; and "the goodness of God leadeth us to repentance:" but impenitent sinners "de-

spise the riches of his goodness and forbearance, and long-suffering; and thus treasure up wrath against the day of wrath."

Again. Sinners are charged with *Insensibility*; ver. 3. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people do not consider." It is a sad thing indeed, that man, who was made in the image of God, should be made by sin like the beasts that perish; yea, worse than they are. The ox is a stupid creature, yet he knows his owner, and submits his neck to the yoke; the ass is more stupid, yet he knows when he is well off, and abides by his master's crib: but sinners are more base, more ignorant, more stupid: "They have the worst qualities of brutes, without the best. They do not know God; they do not consider their duty to God, nor their obligations to God; even Israel, that might and ought to know better."

They are further charged with *forsaking God*. All sinners do so. They turn their backs upon him. They say, in effect, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways:" "What is the Almighty that we should serve him; and what profit shall we have if we pray unto him?" Besides this, they *corrupted others*. They were not content to eat the devil's morsel alone; they must entice others to poison them with it. And, indeed, this is awfully common among us. When young persons fall into the sin of uncleanness, how active are they to seduce others! when men fall into the sin of drunkenness, how busy are they to engage others in the same vice!

These sins were *universal*, ver. 4. "Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity! All orders of people were guilty; the whole head was sick, the whole heart was faint." God knows it is thus in this country. We are a wicked people, and the Lord is provoked with us. All the miseries of human life, all the terrors and agonies of death, all the torments of the damned, are proofs of God's anger against sin. Sin is a heavy load, though fools make light of it. And they who make light of it now are likely to feel its dreadful weight in another world. Sooner or later it will be a burden too heavy to bear. Happy they who now, feeling its load, obey the kind invitation of Christ, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

The condition of Israel, and of every sinner, is compared, ver. 6, to that of a human body wholly disordered, and be-

come intolerably lothesome. "From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." See, sinner, thy wretched picture! Sin is the disease of thy soul, and the worst symptom is, thou knowest it not. We pity the ravings of a man in a fever, who fancies himself in health; such is the dangerous condition of sinners, who boast of their "good hearts," or call their abominations "human frailties," or "youthful follies." In the eyes of a pure and holy God, the sinner is far more lothesome than a carcass covered with bleeding wounds, running sores, or filthy ulcers.

It is absolutely necessary that each of us should personally know that this is his own case. Ministers are, at the peril of their own souls, obliged to declare this; they must show the people their sins, and warn them from God, or the sinner's blood will be required at their hands. But if sinners are faithfully warned, ministers are free from their blood; their blood is on their own heads. But O! how unwilling are men to see and own their true condition! How do they shut their eyes against the light that would make manifest their works of darkness! How dearly do they love the darkness that conceals their sins! How angry are they to be told of their diseases! How do they hate the Gospel that reveals a remedy, and shun the kind physician who would cure them! And yet mark their inconsistency! Do you not hear them deny to men that they are condemned; and yet cry to God to have mercy on them? But if they are not condemned, what need have they of mercy? And if they are, why do they deny their lost estate? We hear them also praising God for his "inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ;" but how absurd is this, if they believe not, if they feel not the wretched bondage of their sins!

But now observe, with wonder and joy, the astonishing grace of God. What language might sinners justly expect, who have been convicted of ingratitude, rebellion, insensibility, and every provoking sin? Might they not well expect that God should say, "Depart from me, ye cursed?" But, O surprising mercy! his language is, "Come now, and let us reason together;" and this is the

SECOND thing in the text, *THE INVITATION*: "And is this the manner of man, O Lord?" Far from it. Truly, "his thoughts are not our thoughts, neither are

his ways our ways." God does not deal with men, as men deal with each other. If a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? No: but God, from whom no enemy can escape, and who can at any time take the deserved vengeance, invites poor sinners to come and reason with him. God had charged Israel with their many sins. He had visited them with national judgments. He had refused to accept their hypocritical devotions. He had threatened to give them up, and utterly forsake them; and lastly, he had called them to repentance and reformation; ver. 16, 17. "Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." And then he adds, "Come, now, and let us reason together." God is willing to show the equity of his conduct. Let these bold offenders come and plead their own cause, and show what they have to say for themselves; and let them find fault, if they can, with the divine proceedings. If they will persist in sin, their damnation is just. If they confess and forsake it, they shall find mercy; their scarlet sins shall be as white as snow.

We shall take occasion, from hence, briefly to show that true religion, *vital* religion, is the most reasonable thing in the world.

Is not self-preservation highly reasonable? We account it the first law of nature, and should blame the man who neglects it. Is a house on fire? let the inhabitant escape for his life. Is the prodigal ready to starve? let him hasten to his father's house. Is the man drowning? let him seize on the rope thrown out for help. Is the ship sinking? let the sailors throw overboard their valuable stores, for "all that a man hath will he give for his life." But is the life of the body all? What must become of the soul? Shall we take all these pains to preserve a life that must inevitably end, and shall we take no pains to save a soul that is immortal, and which must live for ever in heaven or hell? Hear how Christ reasons, Matt. x. 28. "Fear not them which kill the *body*, but are not able to kill the *soul*; but rather fear him, which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell:" for consider—God asks the question—"Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the day that I shall deal with thee?"

Is it not reasonable for a man to do well for himself? "yes: men will praise thee, when thou doest well for thyself!" We commend the honest, ingenious, industri-

ous tradesman; but, O! "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light." Is it reasonable for a man to mind his own business? Well; "one thing is needful;" the care of thy soul is the business of life. Is it reasonable to improve opportunities for business, as fairs and markets? Redeem then the time, and catch the golden opportunities of gain to thy soul. Is it reasonable to make a good bargain? The Christian makes the best in the world. He is the wise merchant, who, seeking goodly pearls, findeth, at length, Jesus Christ, the pearl of great price, and goeth and selleth all that he hath to buy it. Is it reasonable to lay up for a rainy day? How much more to provide for a dying day, that we may be ready for the great change, and find it gain to die! Is it reasonable to cultivate friendship with the wise, the good, and the great? O how wise to make Christ our friend, to have an agent in heaven, an advocate with the Father! for indeed, "Jesus Christ is the best friend or the worst enemy we can have."

Is it not reasonable to believe the God of truth? The word of God has every confirmation we could wish. It is confirmed by the exact fulfilment of numerous predictions, by the performance of unquestionable miracles; by its perfect agreement with matters of fact, both in observation and experience; and by the daily wonders of grace performed by its means. Whatever some men pretend to the contrary, they, and they only, act a rational part, who take God at his word; while others are so unreasonable as to "make God a liar," and give credit to the grand deceiver.

Finally, *Is not love to God and man perfectly reasonable?* This is the whole of our religion. Is it reasonable or not, think you, to love the best of beings better than all other beings? And if we love him, we shall believe him, and obey him. Should not a creature love his Maker? Should not a dependant love his benefactor? Should not a redeemed sinner love his Savior? And what is the whole of morality, as it respects man, but loving our neighbor as ourselves? And where is the man who wishes not thus to be treated by others?

But we have a further and very strong inducement to obey the divine invitation, and come to reason with him, for he has made a most gracious promise in the text, which is the

THIRD particular of our discourse. This gracious promise is, "Though your sins

be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

The pardon of sin is, as we observed at the beginning, the first and chief thing in religion. It was the great business of Christ upon earth to procure it; he took our flesh that he might take our sin, and died, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." It is the principal design of the Gospel, which is preached to us, "that we may obtain forgiveness of sins." It is the first blessing sought by renewed souls; "for this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found." It constitutes one of the titles of the blessed God: "Who is like unto thee that pardoneth iniquity?" And it composes a part of the songs of heaven; for the redeemed continually adore "the Lamb that was slain, and who washes them from their sins in his own blood."

The pardon of sin originates in the free mercy and sovereign grace of God, without respect to any thing good in the creature. That men are saved rather than angels; and that one man is pardoned rather than another, is a matter of mercy alone; for "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy; for he saith to Moses, I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion." It was mere mercy that a Savior was provided, for "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." God delighteth in mercy. It is his most glorious name; for, when Moses desired to see his *glory*, God caused his *goodness* to pass before him, and proclaimed his name: which name was this:—"The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." Exod. xxxiii. 18, 19. and xxxiv. 5, 6. We are not to suppose that some men obtain mercy because they have not sinned so much as others; as great sins do not prevent pardon, so little sins cannot lay a claim to it. Nor are we to think that there are some good things in some sinners to balance their bad ones, and so entitle them to mercy. Nor that the tears, or prayers, or reformation of any man can merit favor at the hands of God. No. All these, and every thing else that looks like merit, must be renounced altogether. Every mouth must be stopped. All the world must plead

guilty; and all the saved must own, that God, "for his own name's sake alone," pardons their iniquity.

But we are not to expect the pardon of sin from an absolute God. The pardon of sin is an act of justice as well as of mercy. Mercy on God's part, but justice on the account of Christ. In the pardon of sin, justice must be considered as well as mercy. If God had pardoned sin without a satisfaction, what provision would have been made for the honor of his holiness, justice, or truth? God would have seemed to wink at sin; he would have seemed to have no concern for the moral government of the world; and his truth, which was engaged to see the threatening against sin fulfilled, would have been forfeited: but in the redemption of Jesus Christ, "mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have embraced each other." In a word, "God is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus:" he is "a just God and a Savior." In this blessed way, justice itself becomes the believer's friend: for Christ having paid the debt, it cannot be demanded a second time of the believer; and, therefore, God is not only merciful in pardoning sin, but "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins; and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John v. 9.

Another principal thing in the doctrine of forgiveness is, that it is *by faith alone* we are made partakers of pardoning mercy. Jesus Christ himself says, Acts xxvi. 18, "That they may receive forgiveness of sins *through faith* that is in me;" and St. Paul says, "By grace are ye saved, *through faith*." By faith we mean "a belief of the truth," especially of the testimony of God concerning his Son Jesus Christ; "that he hath given to us eternal life, and that this life is in his Son." The man who is taught of God, made sensible of his sin, and desirous of mercy, hears the Gospel, which is good news of salvation by Jesus Christ; he hears that "there is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared;" that Christ is willing and able to save sinners, and that "his blood cleanseth from all sin." He assents to this truth, he relies upon it, and acts accordingly; and in proportion to the credit which he gives to the Gospel, and the dependence he places on the faithfulness of God, such is his joy and peace in believing.

One thing more must be noticed:—the perfection of pardon, which is expressed by making scarlet as snow, and crimson like wool. We are to understand this of the *sinner*, not of his *sins*. Pardon does

not alter the nature or lessen the evil of sin; but the sinner, however deeply dyed in sin, double dyed, and drenched in the most enormous, aggravated, and bloody sins, shall, upon believing, be as thoroughly discharged from the guilt of them, as if he had never sinned at all. This is an act of Almighty power. To discharge the colors of scarlet and crimson may be impossible to human art, but to pardon the vilest sinners is perfectly easy to God. Elsewhere the same idea is expressed by casting our sins behind his back—losing them in the depths of the sea—blotting them out of a book—forgetting them, and removing them from us as far as the east is from the west. Such is the perfection of pardoning mercy!

APPLICATION.

COME, sirs, what think you of sin? Perhaps you forget it; but God does not forget it. If it be not pardoned, it will be brought into judgment. Think not yourselves safe, because you fancy your sins are little, or because they give you no disturbance, or because you prosper in the world, or because you have hopes of mercy. "The wages of sin is death." The law curses you for one offence; and if you are not redeemed, you must be ruined; if not pardoned, you must be punished. If you believe not in Christ, you are condemned already. Notwithstanding the mercy of God and the merits of Christ, if you continue in a state of ignorance, carnality, and unbelief, they will not all avail you. Food cannot nourish if not received; nor a medicine heal if not applied. You will be none the better for Christ, if you do not come to him; but you will be much the worse; for how shall you escape, if you neglect so great salvation? Think of these things, O ye children of men, before it be too late. How can you enjoy a meal, or sleep in your beds, while your sins remain unpardoned? O delay no longer. No longer abuse the patience and goodness of God. Instantly fly to the refuge, O ye prisoners of hope. As yet the door is open. God will pardon the greatest sinner that comes to him by Jesus Christ. Take with you the words of the text, and say, "Lord, I come at thy call; my sins are indeed as scarlet, for thy name's sake make them white as snow; my crimes are red like crimson, O wash me in the fountain of the Savior's blood, and they shall be as wool."

Believer! All hail! "Blessed art thou whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity." Happy art

thou. God give thee to see thy sins, to feel thy sins, to lament thy sins. God open thine eyes to understand his Gospel. God enable thee to come with all thy sins to Christ; and believing in him, thou hast passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation. Admire the love of God. Admire the blood of Christ. Admire the grace of the Holy Spirit:

"And let your glad obedience prove
How much you owe, how much you love."

PRAYER.—THOU art justified, O God, when thou speakest; thou art clear when thou judgest. Our sins are as scarlet and crimson. We would not dissemble nor cloke them before thy face, but confess them with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart, to the end we may obtain forgiveness of the same through thine infinite goodness and mercy.

We come, Lord, to thy throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy. Though our sins be as scarlet, O make them white as snow; though they be red like crimson, may they be as wool. May the blood of Jesus Christ, thy Son, cleanse us from all sin.

We bless thee, O Lord, for the kind and encouraging language in which thou hast been pleased to speak to us; for the condescending invitation and the gracious promise of which we have been hearing. O that not one of us may be so unreasonable, so ungrateful, and so foolish, as to neglect the invitation. O that not one of us may be so miserable as to live and die without enjoying the unspeakable blessing promised. For who may stand in thy sight, O Lord, when once thou art angry? And how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation! O that each of us, from the heart, may cry, God be merciful to me a sinner!

SERMON XXXVII.

THE PENITENT THIEF.

Luke xxiii. 42, 43.—And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And he said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.

Who can read these words, or consider the conversion and pardon of the dying thief, without exclaiming, in the words of St. Paul—"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound!" Here is a wonderful instance of divine, free, and sovereign grace, abounding towards the chief of sinners. It is recorded for the encouragement of great sinners, in every age, that *they* may take refuge in Christ "who are ready to perish;" and it affords a pleasing proof that "he is able to save to the uttermost, all who come to God by him."

Our blessed Lord was crucified with two thieves, and placed between them, that he might be thought the worst of the

three. But thus the Scripture was fulfilled, "He was numbered with the transgressors," or "criminals." The chief priests, the scribes, the rulers and the mob, all joined in mocking and deriding him; not content with beholding his extreme sufferings, they had the cruelty to add insult to his pains. "Come down from the cross," said they, "and then we will believe. Thou that didst save others, save thyself:" and "Save us too," said the thieves; not seriously, but by way of taunt; for, it is written, "the thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth." O what an instance is this of the savage hardness of the human heart! how dreadful, that wicked men, dying in their sins, should strive to forget their own agonies, that they might join in abusing and insulting the Son of God! A state of more desperate and confirmed wickedness can hardly be conceived.

But behold the grace of God! One of these men is snatched as a brand from the fire: plucked, as in an instant, out of the very jaws of destruction. An astonishing, perhaps a sudden change is produced. He cries for mercy, and he obtains it. He looks to Jesus, and is saved. From being a hardened sinner, he becomes at once an eminent saint; obtains assurance of immediate bliss; and passes from the gallows to glory.

Let us now carefully consider the two parts of our text, into which it naturally divides itself.

I. The prayer of the dying malefactor.

II. The gracious answer of the Savior.

In attending to the first, consider, for a moment, the character of the criminal, for a criminal he was; a malefactor; a highwayman: one who belonged to a desperate gang of robbers who infested that country; a set of seditious banditti, who were for shaking off the Roman yoke, and who lived by rapine and plunder. It is not improbable that he was a murderer also; for such men scruple not to kill as well as steal. This is the man who becomes the trophy of sovereign grace. For surely it will be admitted that here was no previous goodness or worthiness to recommend him to the divine favor.

Is it not astonishing to hear such a man as this suing for mercy? But what cannot grace effect, and that in a moment! He who in the first creation said, "Let there be light, and light there was," can, in an instant, dart a ray of spiritual light into the darkest mind. Whether any means were employed for the communication of this light or not, we cannot say. Some

imagine he was first affected by the strange, total, supernatural darkness, which then suddenly overspread the land—an emblem of the inward darkness which soon involved the sacred soul of our dear Redeemer; and a dismal presage of the dreadful ignorance and darkness which should cover the Jews; and which has covered them ever since. Possibly, the pathetic prayer of our Lord for his murderers first touched his heart—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." There was so much dignity, so much tenderness and mercy, in this, that perhaps it was the means, in the hands of the Spirit, for melting the rock of ice in his bosom. Or who can say whether, before this unhappy, or shall I say, now *happy* man, joined himself to the gang of thieves, whether he had not, now and then, mingled with the multitude who heard our Savior's sermons, and saw his amazing miracles: and though his vices had long suppressed every good motion in his heart, yet now, in the time of his trouble, he calls to mind what he had before neglected? "For a grain of the divine word frequently falls on an uncultivated soil; so that it produces no fruit till many years after, when sufferings and afflictions cause it to spring up." And this may afford a ray of comfort to ministers and parents, encouraging them to hope, that though their prayers and instructions seem for the present to be lost, yet that, finally, "their labor shall not be in vain in the Lord."

Behold he prayeth! So it was observed of Saul, as a proof of his conversion. So we say, with wonder and surprise, of the thief—Behold he prayeth! Perhaps he never prayed before, or he had long forgot to pray. Had he prayed, he had not come to the cross; he had not been a thief: for, according to the Dutch proverb, "Praying will make a man leave sinning, or sinning will make a man leave praying." Now he prays; and, most wonderful! prays to him who hung upon a cross. He becomes a Christian at once, for a Christian is one who "with the heart believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth maketh confession (of that faith) unto salvation." Rom. x. 10.

He calls Jesus *LORD*, which no man can do aright "but by the Holy Ghost." He gives him this title of dignity and authority, though degraded by the whole Jewish nation, and branded with the name of a rebel, a Samaritan, an impostor.

He owns him also as a *King*, for he begs to be remembered by Jesus "when he shall come into his kingdom." You

know the title that Pilate put over his head on the cross was, *Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews*; and it was put there to intimate his crime, in assuming the character of King, in opposition to Cæsar; but he was really a king; he came into the world to be a king; to set up a new and spiritual kingdom, in opposition, not to Cæsar, but to Satan; and this character he boldly avowed before Pilate. The penitent thief allows his claim, and begs to be admitted among his subjects. He understands also that "Christ's kingdom is not of this world," as the Jews foolishly thought the kingdom of Messiah was to be; and this was their fatal mistake; for on this account they rejected the humble Lord of glory. They despised his mean appearance; they saw no form, nor any beauty, that they should regard him: despised, nor accounted in the number of men. "He was despised, and they esteemed him not," Isa. liii. 2, 3. But the faith of the thief broke through the clouds which obscured his real dignity; and "beheld the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

He pays him the just honor of having heaven at his disposal, according to what our Lord afterwards declared, "I am he that liveth and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell," or, rather, *the unseen world*, including both heaven and hell. Rev. i. 18. The dying thief believed this, and his prayer was the language of faith, a confidential address to the Savior.

Observe also the *modesty* of his application. *Remember me*; not *prefer me* to honor in thy kingdom, as the two ambitious disciples had formerly requested; but, simply, *remember me*; he does not dictate how, or in what manner; he leaves it all to the Lord; but he commits his cause, his soul, to Christ; and, no doubt, with some degree of that satisfaction, which St. Paul expressed in the view of death; "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." 2 Tim. i. 12. It was a request like that which Joseph made to the butler, Gen. xl. 14, "*think on me*, when it shall be well with thee; yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph, but forgot him." The poor thief succeeded better; he was remembered, and saved; for Jesus never said to any soul, "Seek me in vain." "Who-soever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

As the case of this man was singular and extraordinary, so he gave very singu-

lar and extraordinary proofs of his sincerity. The professions of repentance and faith, first made in the hour of distress and in the prospect of death, are often uncertain, and may justly be suspected. Too many who, in the expectation of death, have seemed to be much in earnest, and gave great hope to Christian friends of a real change, have proved by their conduct, when they recovered, that they were not sincere; for the vilest of men generally respect religion in their dying hours. But the penitent thief was enabled to give the most satisfactory evidence of sincerity; and the answer of Christ to him puts it beyond a doubt. Observe now the marks of his sincerity.

(1.) *He reproves sin* in his comrade, especially his sin in reviling Christ—"Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" Persecutors of Christ, in his person, or in his members, awfully prove their want of the fear of God: and every sin is greatly aggravated by that hardness of heart which persists in it, even in the time of sore affliction. True repentance will always occasion a sincere hatred to sin. True grace will ever make a man feel for others. The love of God and the love of man are always united. The true penitent will say with penitent David, "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee." Ps. li. 13.

(2.) *He condemns himself*, and admits the justice of God and of the magistrate in bringing him to the fatal tree—we suffer justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds. Shameful and painful as our death is, it is no more than we deserve. A just sense of sin will make a sufferer patient. He will say, "against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and clear when thou judgest." Ps. ii. 4.

(3.) *He vindicates Christ*—"But this man hath done nothing amiss." The Jewish courts had condemned him to death as the vilest of miscreants, and the whole multitude had cried, "Crucify him, crucify him;" but the thief, more honest and better taught than they, justifies his whole character: and truly says, "he hath done nothing amiss." Thus, in the face of all his infamous and powerful slanderers, he declares the innocence of Jesus, who was, indeed, "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners."

This was clearly manifested the reality of that great and gracious change which had taken place in his heart. He was evi-

dently enlightened in the knowledge of Christ; he was convinced of his sin and misery; he was humbled for it; he repented sin in his neighbor; he honored the character of Christ; he owned him as Lord, and King, and Savior; and he commits his departing spirit into his faithful hands. What wonders of grace were crowded into this small place, enabling him, in a few minutes, to give more glory to Christ than many do in the whole course of their lives!

II. Let us now proceed to consider the gracious answer of our Savior to his dying request. *And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.*

Recollect, my friends, the situation of our Lord when he made this answer. Call to mind his personal sufferings at the moment. Behold him naked upon the cross. He that clothed the heavens with stars, the earth with flowers, and man with raiment, is despoiled of all his garments, and hangs exposed to the scorn of the rude mob. Great was the torment of crucifixion. First stretched and racked upon the cross, while it lay on the ground; then nailed to it, through the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet, with exquisite torture; the tree, being elevated, is by a violent concussion settled in the ground; while every joint and sinew is painfully distended, and his whole weight borne by the wounded parts. But "the sufferings of his soul were the soul of his sufferings." A sense of his Father's wrath, and the burthen of the sins of the world, now lay heavy upon his soul. Darkness, that might be felt, filled his holy mind, and in the agony of his spirit, he cries aloud, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

Remember it was during this inexpressible grief, that the Lord of life vouchsafes this gracious answer. Excessive pain or grief usually prevents our care for others; but the agonies of our Savior lessened not his compassion for the souls of men. From the moment of his last visit to Jerusalem, "when he wept over it," until he gave up the ghost, tender pity to sinful men vented itself in the most affectionate accents. Witness his parting discourse and pathetic prayer after the passover. Witness his kind apology for his sleeping disciples. Witness his direction to the sympathizing females, "weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." Witness his intercession for his murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And now, upon the first application of this

poor abandoned sinner, he instantly complies with his request, and grants him exceeding abundantly above all he could ask or think.

How readily does God regard the sinner's cry! With speed like that which winged the feet of the prodigal's aged father, who no sooner beheld at a distance his long-lost, but now returning son, but "while he was yet a great way off, had compassion, and ran and fell upon his neck, and kissed him." God is slow to anger, but quick to mercy; ready to forgive. He discerns the first motion of the soul heaven-ward, and while the sinner is "yet speaking" in prayer, the prayer is heard and answered.

Observe the substance of the answer—a place in paradise—Christ's company there—immediately, "to-day;" and the solemn assurance of the whole, "Verily, I say unto thee," it shall be so.

A place in paradise is promised; a place in hell was his desert, and would have been his portion, had he died in the same state he was in half an hour before. Heaven is here called "Paradise;" in allusion to the garden of Eden which the Lord God himself planted, and in which he put the man he formed. By sin, Adam soon lost his garden, and his God. "He drove out the man." By the first Adam, Paradise is lost; by the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, Paradise is regained; a far better Paradise; a garden, from whence the blessed inhabitants shall never be driven out. "Here grows the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the valley. Here flourishes the plant of renown; here the unforbidden tree of knowledge, and the unguarded tree of life." No subtle serpent annoys this happy spot, any more to seduce; nor shall the free will of man betray him to ruin again.

Jesus promises to the penitent the enjoyment of *his own company there*—"this day thou shalt be *with me* in Paradise." Christ, then, was going, not to hell, to redeem the damned, as some have supposed, but to heaven; where he assures the thief he shall also be. It is the presence of Christ that makes heaven so glorious and happy. With this he consoled his mourning friends, John xiv. "I am going to prepare a place for you; and I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also." Amazing favor, "to be with Christ!" this is enough. He asked a bare remembrance, as if distant; Jesus promises his own immediate presence.

And how quickly was this to be enjoined

ed! "To-day." He had prayed—"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." He knew not when that might be; perhaps he thought of some very distant time. Christ says "to-day." How short and speedy was this man's journey to glory! In the morning, he was posting to hell; in the evening he is with Christ in heaven. This Scripture teaches us a pleasant truth, namely, that there is no interval between the time of our departure from this world, by death, and our admission into the realms of glory. Some have dreamt that the soul sleeps till the resurrection; but Christ assures the thief, and assures us by the same word, of an immediate entrance into heaven; that so, being "absent from the body," we may be "present with the Lord."

Of all this, Jesus vouchsafes the most solemn assurance: he adds his usual asseveration, "Verily." Perhaps he saw some rising doubts in the sinner's mind. The blessing promised was so vast and unexpected; he might feel so much his own vileness and unworthiness, as to fear he should not obtain it; but, to put the matter out of all doubt, Christ adds a kind of oath to his promise, that so this "heir of promise might have strong consolation." And is not the Scripture full of similar assurances, "that whosoever believeth in Jesus shall not perish, but have everlasting life?" yea, more: "he that believeth hath," even now, "hath everlasting life; and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."—"Wherefore then dost thou doubt, O thou of little faith?"

APPLICATION.

1. BEWARE of abusing this glorious instance of free grace. Many have been very cautious in speaking of it, and have rather labored to obscure its glory, by studying to find out something good in the character of the thief, lest his example of grace, purely free, and granted at the last hour, should have a dangerous tendency, and encourage men to defer their repentance; presumptuously hoping to be saved at the last moment, like the thief. But a sober consideration of the matter may prevent this abuse; while we must take care to do nothing to diminish the glory of divine grace, in this instance so illustriously displayed. It has been often and justly observed, "We have but *one* such instance recorded in all the Bible: *one* sinner converted at the hour of death, that we may hope; and *but one*, that we may fear." And suppose it had once happened that a person had leaped down from a lofty

precipice without losing his life, would it be prudent for ten thousand other people to run the risk, and leap down after him? Dreadfully hazardous, indeed, it is, for men to presume on a death-bed repentance. "Repentance is the gift of God;" he is bound to bestow it at no time; and can it be reasonably expected at the close of a life of sin and rebellion? Let it be considered how many die suddenly, without a moment's warning; how many die on their beds, who are so flattered by their disorder, or their friends, that they have no expectation at all of death. Others die in the delirium of a fever; or are otherwise disabled by extreme agony or weakness for serious reflection. And some die hardened, like the other thief on the cross; for, in general, men die as they live.

But behold and admire the grace of God! Salvation is always of grace. Surely it was so in this instance. Sin indeed abounded, but grace superabounded. Whoever is saved, must be saved on the very same terms as the thief was, "justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ;" "without money and without price;" "not of works, lest any man should boast." Boasting is always excluded in salvation, whoever is the subject of it. How eminently so here! Who was it that made one thief to differ from the other? Bishop Hall says, "Lord, he could not have spoken this to thee, but by thee. What possibility was there for a thief to think of thy kingdom without thy Spirit? That good Spirit of thine breathed upon this man, breathed not upon his fellow: their trade was alike; their state alike; their sin was alike; their cross alike; only thy mercy makes them unlike. One is taken, the other left. Blessed be thy mercy, in taking one! Blessed be thy justice, in leaving the other! Who can despair of that mercy? who can but tremble at that justice?"

Let every sinner, who reads or hears this, know he needs mercy, just as much as this criminal. "But I am not a thief," says one. Perhaps you have not robbed man, but have you not "robbed God?" Have you not defrauded him of "the glory due to his name! Have you not robbed him of the Sabbath, a portion of time which he demands for his own service? Have you not embezzled his talents, which were given you to trade with for the purpose of his honor, and your salvation?" Boast not, then, that *you* "have paid every man his own," when *you* have, in a thousand instances, defrauded the blessed God of his due. See

then the necessity of mercy, and dread the thoughts of a double condemnation, the one for *sin*, and the other for *unbelief*.

May the goodness of God, so divinely displayed in this instance, draw thee to repentance. Jesus Christ "came, to seek and to save that which was lost." This was always his character, and he maintained it to the last. His enemies reproached him for it; they called him "the friend of sinners;" so he was; but not the friend of sin. Blessed be his name, he is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." he casts out none that come. O come, and try him. What encouragement is here for him "that is ready to perish;" who has a world of guilt, and not a grain of worthiness! Say, with the dying thief, "Lord, remember me, now thou art in thy kingdom," and he will find a place in Paradise for you, even for you.

This prayer will suit the Christian all his days, Lord, remember me. When guilt recurs; when temptations assault; when troubles arise; look to the Savior. He who "remembered thee in thy low estate," will not forget thee now. Like the High-Priest of old, he bears the names of all his people on his heart; and though even a tender mother may forget her sucking child, yet he protests he will remember thee. In return, go thou and remember him.

PRAYER.—BLESSED Jesus! thou art full of compassion. Thou art able and willing to save to the uttermost all who come to God by thee. We praise thee for thy merciful kindness in descending from Heaven to Earth for us men, and for our salvation. We praise thee for that condescending love which made thee willing to be numbered with the transgressors: and we praise thee for that compassion, which, on the cross, thou didst manifest towards the dying criminal who implored thy help. O thou gracious Redeemer! thou art the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever! Still art thou rich in mercy unto all that call upon thee; unto all that call upon thee in truth.

Let none, we beseech thee, be suffered to abuse this glorious example of thy pardoning mercy, by continuing in sin; and by putting off, to a dying hour, the care of the immortal spirit. Grant that they who are tempted thus to act, may remember how uncertain it is when, and in what manner the messenger of death shall come; and that now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation.

We pray that the mercy shown to the dying thief, may be the means of encouraging many a self-condemned, trembling penitent, to trust in the same mercy, believing that where sin abounded, grace shall much more abound. And O that the goodness of God may lead others to repentance! May the bright beams of mercy, reflected from the Savior's cross, melt the stout-hearted rebel into tears of godly sorrow.

That these happy effects may follow the words

which have now been addressed to the outward ear, we pray that the same divine influence which caused repentance and faith to spring up in the heart of a once-hardened criminal, may descend on this assembly, and be imparted to every individual present.

O Lord Jesus, remember us now that thou art in thy kingdom. Remember us with the favor which thou bearest to thy people. In all time of our tribulation, in all time of our wealth, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, good Lord, remember and deliver us.

SERMON XXXVIII.

THE WORLD TO COME.

Luke xx. 35, 36. But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage. Neither can they die any more: for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.

It may justly excite our wonder and our grief, that believers, who are professed candidates for another world, should have their hearts so little set upon their heavenly home. The glory that shall be revealed, and which faith humbly expects; is so exceedingly great, that one should suppose the children of God would scarcely be able to think or speak of any thing else. But, alas! it is not so. "Our soul cleaveth to the dust," and we have abundant cause to pray, "Quicken thou us, according to thy word." May the Lord bless our meditations on this passage of Scripture, in which Jesus Christ replies to the objections of the Sadducees against the doctrine of the resurrection! The Sadducees were the disciples of Sadoc, and composed one of the four sects of the Jews; their leading notion was, that "there is no resurrection;" ver. 27; they also denied the existence of angels, the immortality of the soul, and a future state. The Sadducees thought to perplex the doctrine of the resurrection, by proposing the case of a woman who had been married to seven different men. "In the resurrection, said they, whose wife of them is she?" Our Lord mildly answered this impertinent question, by showing that there is a vast difference between the state of men on earth, and that of the children of God in heaven; a great difference between this world and that world. The whole passage is full of instruction, which we shall endeavor to obtain, by making several observations upon it.

Observe, I. There is another world.

Our Lord calls it *that world*. It is evi-

dently opposed to "*this world*," ver. 34, "the children of *this world*." We know a little of *this world*. O that we knew aright! O that we saw it with the eyes of faith! We should then confess it to be a *vain world*; "for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." Solomon, who made a full trial of the world, with advantages for making it above all other men, solemnly pronounces the whole to be, "vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities, and vexation of spirit." How emphatically is it expressed! as if his heart was full of the idea; as if he longed to impress it upon others; as if he could not find sufficient words to do it. And remember *who* it was that declared this. Not a hermit, who never saw the world; not a pauper, who has got nothing in the world; not a spendthrift, who has lost all he had in the world: but "the king of Jerusalem," who abounded in wealth and honor, and who had tried the whole round of worldly pleasures. If *he* pronounces all to be vanity, *we* need not make the fruitless experiment; for "what shall the man do who cometh after the King?"

This world is as *wicked* as it is vain. "This present *evil world*," St. Paul calls it; "The world that lieth in the wicked one," saith St. John. It was *good*, when God first made it, "very good;" but sin has made it evil; filled it with snares and sorrows; insomuch that it is a part of Christ's redemption, "to deliver us from this present evil world;" and from Satan, "the prince of this world," who makes use of its pleasures as baits, to destroy the souls of men. And yet, such is the evil heart of man, that he dotes upon this evil world; he seeks "his good things in this world;" his portion is in this life; he is "a man of the world;" or, as Christ says, ver. 34, "a child of this world."

But there is *another world*. Solemn truth! generally admitted, but little regarded. O think of it, you who trifle away your precious time. There is another world; and though you forget it, you are hastening towards it every moment. Yes! there is another world. Jesus Christ, who came from it, and who is gone to it again, Jesus Christ assures us of it. "He has brought life and immortality to *light*;" he has made a plain revelation of it in the Gospel, which shows us the *certain*ty of it; the sublime, excellent, and spiritual *nature* of it, as in our text; together with the true and only *way* of obtaining eternal life, which is by Jesus

Christ. Our Lord, in his public discourses, often spoke of another world, of heaven, and of hell, very plainly, very familiarly, very solemnly; urging his hearers, by arguments drawn from eternity, to regard the things which belonged to their peace.

The world of which we speak is a world of *light*, and *purity*, and *joy*: "There is no night there." Hell is eternal darkness, Heaven eternal light. No ignorance, no errors, no mistakes; but the knowledge of God in Christ, begun on earth, is there completed; for "we shall know even as we are known." The heavenly world is all *purity* and holiness. Nothing retaining the defilement of sin can have admission there; only "the pure in heart shall see God." And there, *joy*, which also commenced on earth in the possession of "spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus," shall be full, uninterrupted, and everlasting. "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying: neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."

Such is *that world* our Lord here speaks of; and it is the grand object of faith. Believers in all ages have kept it in view. Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, lived and died in the faith of it; they desired a *heavenly country*, and, in the hope of it, were dead to this world; "confessing themselves strangers and pilgrims on earth." The apostles "having the same spirit of faith," looked "not at the things which are seen," like archers, intently viewing the mark they shoot at; their object was nothing visible and sensible: but they "looked at the things unseen," they seriously regarded, and carefully aimed at heavenly things, as the grand mark, the noble prize of their high calling in Christ Jesus.

And is this the character of real Christians? Stop a moment, and ask, Is it yours? Amidst the unavoidable labors, and the lawful pleasures of this world, is heaven the principal object? Or do you wholly forget it? It has scarcely even a place in your thoughts; and can you suppose you shall ever enjoy glory without seeking it? Be not deceived, for,

Observe, II. It will be a great matter to *obtain* that world.

Notice our Savior's words, "they which shall be accounted worthy to *obtain* that world." O it will be a great matter to obtain that world. Surely men do not believe there is such a world; for faith, of any sort, will work. What is it sets the world of men in motion? what makes them so busy from morning to night? Is

it not the belief that they shall obtain something worth their pains? Why then are no pains taken to obtain heaven? Infidelity lies at the bottom of their sloth, or people would seek heaven as diligently as they seek this present world. "So run," saith St. Paul, "that ye may obtain." "Know ye not," saith he, "that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain." 1 Cor. ix. 24. The Christian life is a race, and heaven is the prize: and a race implies motion, vehement motion, and continued motion. O let us be in good earnest for heaven. Lazy wishes and formal religion will not do. Christ represents it as a great thing to obtain that world.

It will be a matter of amazing *grace* and favor. Labor we must; yet, after all, it is a matter of pure mercy, for "the gift of God is eternal life." Every glorified saint will be filled with surprise, and will be ready to say, Lord, is it I?

"How can it be, thou Heavenly King,
That thou shouldst me to glory bring:
Make slaves the partners of thy throne,
Deck'd with a never-fading crown."

And O what a matter of infinite *joy* will it be! If angels rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, it is because they foresee its final result; the foundation is laid, and they rejoice to think they shall witness the top-stone laid also, and shall "shout Grace! Grace! unto it." Yea, the blessed Redeemer himself shall rejoice "when he sees the travail of his soul;" he will reckon all his pains and sorrows and sufferings amply recompensed, when he beholds the millions of his elect safely brought to glory.

O, then, let the obtaining of that world be our first business in this. So Christ directs—"Seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness;" let care for heaven precede all other cares: Seek it *first*, seek it early in life; and seek it early every morning. Seek it earnestly as the chief thing, "for what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul." Heaven is all, and heaven will make amends for all.

Observe, III. Some kind of *worthiness* is necessary to the obtaining of that world—"they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world."

This worthiness includes *merit* and *meekness*; or, a *title* to glory, and a *fitness* for it. Both these are necessary. But where shall we look for merit? Not in man. Man is a sinner, and a sinner merits only hell, for the "wages of sin is death." "All men have sinned and come short of

the glory of God." The best man in the world can lay no claim to heaven; if he could, there would be room for boasting: "but boasting is excluded." "No flesh shall glory in his presence." If any man glory, it must be in the Lord. It is the merit, or, more properly speaking, the righteousness of Christ, which is the believer's title to heaven. This, like the wedding-garment in the parable, is the only dress in which a sinner can appear before God, or sit down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb.

But there is a *meetness* or *fitness* for that world, which is equally necessary. St. Paul gives thanks to God, Col. i. 12, "who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Observe, heaven is for *saints*, that is, *sanctified persons*; and they who are not saints on earth, will never be saints in heaven. All who are designed for heaven hereafter, are prepared for heaven now. Only those who are sanctified shall be glorified. And this is evident to common sense. Every creature has its proper element. The fish cannot fly in the air, nor the bird swim in the water. And how can we suppose that the man, who drinketh in iniquity like water, can be fit to be with angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, where all is pure and holy? A good man, who was dying, said, "I shall change my place, but not my company." Let them think of this, whose chosen company is the profane and the lewd. O how vain are the hopes which many persons entertain of future happiness! In vain the proud Pharisee, who talks of his good heart and his good works, expects a place among the redeemed; for their song is, not "worthy self;" but "worthy is the Lamb that was slain, who hath redeemed us to God by his blood." As vain are the hopes of the carnal and worldly man, whose affections cleave to earth, who lives in the love and practice of known iniquity, whose inmost soul abhors the spiritual life, who accounts the Sabbath a burden, and who lives "without Christ in the world." Know, O vain man, thy hope is folly and presumption, and hear what Christ has declared with a double *Verily*—"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." John iii. 3.

But thrice happy are they who are prepared for heaven; who are "born of the Spirit," and made spiritual in the frame of their mind; whose hearts are weaned in some degree from earthly things; who possess the world as though they possessed it not; who have desires and affections

suit to the work, and delight of heaven: "He who hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God;" these are "the first-fruits of the Spirit," the foretaste of heaven; and those who enjoy it shall be "accounted worthy to obtain that world."

Observe, IV. That the relations of the present world will not subsist in the world to come; our Lord says, *they neither marry nor are given in marriage.*

This expression is not intended to disparage that kind of union; for marriage was ordained of God himself, while yet our first parents retained their original innocence. This relation is the first that subsisted between human beings; it is the source of all other relations, and superior to them all; for "for this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother, and cleave unto his wife." And our Lord was so far from discouraging marriage, that he graced a marriage feast with his presence, and wrought his first miracle there.

But in heaven this relation will cease; because the purposes for which it was instituted will also cease. There will be no death in heaven; consequently no vacancies, such as death here makes, to be filled up. In this world "one generation passeth away, and another cometh." The world is like an inn, where travellers take a hasty refreshment and are gone; while a succession of new travellers occupy their places. Where are the former inhabitants of this place; they are mingled with the dust, the places which knew them, know them no more: we who are present supply their room; and, in a short time, another generation shall succeed us. But the inhabitants of heaven dwell in a "continuing city," "a house not made with hands, whose builder and maker is God;" yea, they are like "pillars in his temple, and shall no more go out."

The blessed God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, has been pleased to appoint marriage as a remedy against fornication, that natural desires might not become brutal, but be under direction and control. Alas! what abominations spring from the neglect of this remedy?—what impurities, what excesses, what poverty, what disease, what infamy, what bloodshed, what misery, have abounded in the world, by the unbridled lusts of the sexes! And, O, how few consider, that "for all these things God will bring them into judgment!" But in the heavenly world, those who were on earth purified in measure, shall be perfectly pure; the body of sin and death shall also be purged in the

grave; and no disorderly passion, nor sensual appetite, shall ever molest them again.

Nor shall the glorified need the aid of that domestic friendship and comfort which result from the married state, and which are well suited to our embodied state; for even in Paradise the Creator judged "it was not good for man to be alone." But in heaven there will be no occasion for the lesser streams of happiness, when believers have arrived at the fountain. In that blessed state, "the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." Rev. xxi. 3. And it is added, ver. 22, "the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of the Lord did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." God, in Christ, will be the everlasting fountain of knowledge and joy; so that the aid of creature comforts shall no more be wanted, than the light of a candle at noon-day.

O let us learn from hence to sit loose to all creatures and creature comforts; "it remaineth that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away." Cor. vii. 29.

Observe, V. In that world, *death* will be for ever abolished.

This is a dying world. We are placed as in a field of battle; our relations and neighbors are falling all around us, so that we may almost say—"Where is the earth that hath not been alive?" Death is to mortals "The king of terrors." Many thoughtless creatures, indeed, will hardly allow themselves to think of it; but, when it approaches, what agonies and terrors seize their souls! sin is neither pardoned nor subdued, and preparation for eternity is not begun. Even some of the timid flock of Christ, weak in their faith, are, inconsistently with the glorious Gospel they profess, too much in bondage through fear of death. But Christ hath abolished death, 2 Tim. i. 10. He hath taken away its sting, and changed its very nature, turning the curse into a blessing; and as to the second death, far more dreadful than the first, it is lost and gone for ever: *He that believeth shall never die—believest thou this?* John xi. Instead of death, eternal life is the believer's portion; even now the Christian hath it, and it shall be perfected at the resurrection, when this mor-

tal shall put on immortality. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

Let this reconcile us to death. We shall die but once. It alleviates the distress of some bodily disorders, as the small-pox for instance, that persons suffer them but once, and are not liable to have them again. It is a far greater satisfaction which Christ affords us in our text, *Neither shall they die any more*; especially as death itself is also become a privilege; it is the gate of life, and ushers us into his presence, where "there is fullness of joy, and pleasures for evermore."

Observe, VI. The blessed inhabitants of that world shall be like the angels; *they are equal to the angels*.

Angels are spiritual beings, not having bodies as we have, but possessing rational powers superior to ours. They are pure and holy beings, having never rebelled against God, as their fallen brethren the devils have, and as we the children of men have. They do the will of God with pleasure, and are the messengers of God's mercy to men; "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be the heirs of salvation."

At present, we are far inferior to angels, not only in our natural powers, but especially in holiness and purity. We inhabit a body of sin and death, and by our connexion with a system of flesh and blood, are greatly hindered in our spiritual pursuits, and disposed to evil. Thus the Apostle speaks, Rom. vii. 22, &c. "I delight in the law of God after the inward man, (the renewed mind) but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members;" and on this account he cries, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" All believers have daily cause to make the same complaint; "for the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit, so that they cannot do the things that they would." On this ground, our suffering Savior kindly apologized for his sleeping disciples in the garden; "The Spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak."

But our Lord here assures his people they shall be equal with the angels; they shall drop the clog of their mortal bodies, and lose the encumbrance of flesh and blood; no sensual appetites shall divert their affections from spiritual objects; but, with the same agility and spirituality as the angels themselves, they shall serve their dear Lord, day and night, in his tem-

ple, and be supremely happy in the full enjoyment of God and the Lamb.

O let us endeavor to resemble angels now, as much as possible. We are taught to pray, "thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven;" and that we may do it, let us not indulge our sensual appetites too much, but with St. Paul, "bring our bodies into subjection, and keep them under."

Observe, VII. The resurrection of the body will perfect the bliss of God's people; *they are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection; they shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead*.

The heavenly felicity of believers shall commence at the moment of death. No sooner are they "absent from the body," but they are "present with the Lord:" but their bliss will not be consummated till the morning of the resurrection. In the prospect of this, holy Job says, *All the days of my appointed time, (that is, in the grave) will I wait till my change come*: (glorious change it will be! for *the Lord will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like his glorious body*.) Thou shalt call, saith he, and I will answer thee, (for the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God) *thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands*. Job. xiv. 14. The human body is the exquisite workmanship of God's hand; and being redeemed by Jesus Christ, as well as the soul, it shall be rescued from the power of the grave. Then *the creature*, the corporeal part of the Christian, which had long been made subject to vanity, "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God." This is the "manifestation of the sons of God," when they shall appear like themselves, and like their glorious Redeemer. This is also called "the adoption." Believers are now the adopted sons of God; but this dignity is denied by the world, and sometimes obscured to themselves. But then God will own and publish it before all the world, and the matter will be put beyond dispute. Their bodies then shall be as much more glorious than those of the wicked, as their souls are now more gracious than theirs. And as Christ was by his "resurrection declared to be the Son of God with power," so shall his humble followers be. Rom. viii. 19—23.

Thus we have taken a distant view of the future world, of which so many useful hints are suggested in the text. Let us daily walk as expectants of another world. Let us remember it will be a great matter

to obtain that world. Let us recollect what that worthiness is, which is requisite to the obtaining of it, namely, the righteousness of Christ, and the sanctifying influence of the Spirit. Let us remember, that human relations and connexions, however useful and comfortable at present, will cease at death; but that death itself shall also be abolished. Let us enjoy the thought of being holy, happy, and spiritual, like the blessed angels; and try to resemble them now in our cheerful and active obedience. Finally, in the prospect of a glorious resurrection, let us "be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord."

PRAYER.—TEACH us, O Lord, so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Turn away our eyes from beholding vanity. Help us to look, not on things which are seen, but at things which are not seen; because the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

O that we may be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead! On the solemn morning of the last day, when all that are in the dust of death shall rise, and some to shame and everlasting contempt, may it be our happiness to rise, with all the redeemed, to everlasting life. To this end grant us, O Lord, both the title to Heaven, and the fitness for it. We acknowledge that, shouldst thou deal with us after our sins, and reward us according to our iniquities, Hell and not Heaven would be our portion. We therefore pray to be found in Christ, not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith. And O make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. As that world is a holy world, make us holy, that we may be prepared for it.

Have mercy, Lord, on those who have their portion in this life, who are often saying, What shall we eat? what shall we drink? and wherewithal shall we be clothed? but never say, How shall we escape the damnation of Hell?—May they remember that there is but a step betwixt them and death; and that after death is the judgment. May they seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and give all diligence to make their calling and election sure.

SERMON XXXIX.

SAFETY IN THE ARK FOR PERISHING SINNERS.

Gen. vii. 1. Come, thou, and all thy house, into the Ark.

THIS is the gracious invitation which God gave to Noah just before the flood came upon the world of the ungodly. The world had been formed about 1500 years, and the number of mankind was greatly

multiplied. But wickedness also greatly increased, until the wrath of God was dreadfully kindled, and he determined upon the general destruction of sinners. "And the Lord said, I will destroy man, whom I have created, from the face of the earth, for it repenteth me that I have made him." But Noah, who, amidst the general depravity, was righteous and pious, "found grace in the eyes of the Lord." To him he made known his designs, an hundred and twenty years before the flood; and directed him to build an immense vessel, like the hulk of a ship, in which himself and his family should be preserved. Noah believed, and obeyed. The ark was ready, and the deluge was at hand. "Then the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou, and all thy house, into the ark." Noah entered. The Lord shut him in. The flood prevailed. Mankind was destroyed. Noah and his family continue a year in the ark in safety, are then released from their confinement, and become the founders of a new world.

There is much instruction to be gathered from this affecting history; and it affords a lively type or emblem of the salvation that is in Christ for perishing sinners. It is still the determination of the holy God, to punish the ungodly. He gives them warning, and allows them time and space for repentance. He has also provided an ark for the preservation of those who foresee their danger; and by the Gospel he invites sinners to fly to this refuge. Happy they, who, like Noah, believe, obey, and are saved. For the sake of order and of memory, we shall divide our discourse into three parts, and observe,

I. There is a deluge of wrath coming upon sinners.

II. There is an ark provided for preservation.

III. God graciously invites sinners to come into it.

I. There is a dreadful deluge of wrath coming upon the ungodly. Sin only was the cause of the flood in Noah's time, and sin will bring upon every impenitent unpardoned soul a more dreadful punishment. "By one man sin entered into the world," and that man lived long enough to witness its rapid growth; he lived to see the world peopled with men, and overrun with wickedness. But in the family of *Seth*, from which it was designed that the Savior should come, the fear and worship of God was long preserved. While these continued separate from the posterity of Cain, there was a seed to serve the Lord. But at length this distinction ceased: for "the

sons of God (the children of Seth) saw the daughters of men (the posterity of Cain) that they were fair, and they took them wives of all which they chose." The professors of religion married the profane; they were "unequally yoked with unbelievers;" and what was the consequence? Iniquity increased faster than ever. "The bad will sooner debauch the good, than the good reform the bad." Wickedness became triumphant, and many seem to have been giants in sin, as well as in size. "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "The earth also was corrupt before God; and the earth was full of violence, for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." The Lord who saw all this was greatly displeased; and, speaking after the manner of man, "he repented that he had made man, and it grieved him at his heart." The blessed God cannot be disturbed by any uneasy passion; but these expressions signify his extreme displeasure against sin and sinners; they show that sin is most odious to his holiness, and sinners most obnoxious to his justice. Being thus provoked to anger, he said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is *flesh*; that is, wholly fleshly, carnally minded, entirely sensual, sunk in fleshly lust. He therefore determined on the utter destruction of all mankind by an universal deluge. Yet he is pleased to give warning of it, and suspend the threatened ruin for one hundred and twenty years; which, as men then lived about nine hundred years, was such a reprieve to them, as nine or ten years would be to us.

Men and brethren, sin is the same evil and destructive thing now that it was then. God is equally angry with sinners; and though he does not generally execute his wrath upon them in this world, yet he will assuredly do it in the world to come. Hear what the holy, fiery law of God saith to every transgressor. Gal. iii. 10. *Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* The condition of life by the law is personal, perpetual, perfect obedience to all its commands, doing all things required, and doing them always without one omission, without one transgression. A single failure, even in thought, spoils a whole life of obedience, and incurs the curse. You will say then, Upon these terms, who can be saved? We answer. None. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." It is a vain

thing therefore to look for life by the law, or our good works as they are called; if ever we escape the curse, it must be through faith in Jesus Christ, who "hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." The whole book of God is full of threatenings against sin. It declares that "the wicked shall be turned into hell;" that "If the wicked turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow and made it ready; he hath prepared the instruments of death." Psalm vii. 11, &c. You tremble to see a criminal just ready for execution; behold, the instruments of eternal death are ready. And this is your own case at this very moment, if you are yet in your sins. "The wrath of God abideth upon you;" and, the longer you live in sin, the more are you "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

How merciful was God in giving warning to the old world! His servant Noah was a preacher of righteousness. The Spirit of Christ was in him, and by this Spirit he preached to the disobedient and rebellious sinners of that time, as St. Peter speaks, 1 Pet. iii. 19. *By which (Spirit) he went and preached to the spirits in prison; which some time were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing.* Christ, by his Spirit in Noah, was the preacher. The hearers were the wicked people of the world in Noah's days, but when Peter wrote this they were *spirits*; disembodied spirits *in prison*, that is, in the prison of hell; so that they were not only drowned, but damned. This passage therefore does not mean that they were in prison when Christ preached to them, as the Papists pretend; but Christ, by his Spirit, preached to them on earth; yet, alas! to no purpose. Noah might say, with the apostles and others, "Who hath believed our report?" They were disobedient; they did not regard the merciful warning; and very probably despised and ridiculed Noah for his faith, his preaching, and his building. Thousands would come to see the ark, and ask him what it was for; they would ask him whether he meant to sail on dry land; or, where so much water must come from as would drown the world? Such a thing, they would say, is quite contrary to reason, such a thing never was, nor ever can be; and no doubt they would say, Noah was righteous overmuch, and religion had turned his brain.

In the very same manner the merciful

warnings of God are treated to this day. Serious religion is despised: Holiness is accounted needless preciseness; and *the terrors of the Lord*, by which we would persuade men, are reckoned idle bugbears, fit only to alarm weak people and children. Thus unbelief tends to eternal ruin and destruction; for no person will fly from the wrath to come, who does not believe wrath is coming; who does not believe God, who says it is coming. But this very unbelief fulfils the Scriptures. St. Peter says, "In the last days there shall be *scoffers* walking after their own lust, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." But this is false. The world was once destroyed by water, and it shall be again by fire. Not only does the Scripture assure us of the deluge, but almost all nations retain a tradition of it: and we may see the traces of it with our own eyes. The trees which are found in the bowels of the earth; and the shells and bones of fishes dug out of mountains remote from the sea, are ocular proofs of this event. But sin hardens the hearts of men, and they will not believe till they feel. Our Savior tells us it will be just the same at the day of Judgment. Matt. xxiv. 37, &c. "But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark; and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

They knew not—mark the expression! *They knew not*. How could they help knowing, when they were told of it for 120 years! the meaning is—they *believed not*. They might have known, but they would not know; they would not believe; they reasoned themselves out of it. Just so do sinners now. They love sin, and they will not believe that God will punish it; which is, in fact, saying that God is a liar, and will not do as he has said. They were secure, because they were sensual; they were eating and drinking, minding the things that were seen, and so neglecting the things that were not seen.

Nevertheless, "the flood came, and took them all away." "If we believe not, God abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself." "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his words shall not pass away." Whatever God threatens or promises is sure to come

to pass. The flood came. Then they saw what they would not believe. The day of mercy was ended. There was no hope for them; no means of escape; but they miserably perished in the mighty waters.

Let us now turn our eyes from this dreadful scene, to contemplate the goodness of God towards Noah and his family; let us consider,

II. The ark provided for his preservation.

God himself devised this means of safety. He directed him to build a vessel of immense size, and pointed out all the dimensions of it. Proper rooms were to be made for his family, and others for a small remnant of all other creatures, who were thus to be preserved from the universal desolation.*

Thus the salvation of the church is by a plan of God's own contrivance. The method of salvation by Jesus Christ is wholly of God. It could never have entered into the heart of man. No human or angelic being could ever have thought of God's taking our nature into union with his own; or have devised the astonishing plan of redemption by the blood of his Son. So remote is this method from the wisdom of man, that he calls it "foolishness;" but it is "the wisdom of God:" yea, "the manifold wisdom of God" is therein displayed; and it will be the admiration of saints and angels to all eternity.

As fallen man is totally ruined, it is necessary that his restoration should be in such a way as to secure the whole glory of it to God alone. And so it does. In the Redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ, "Grace reigns," from first to last. Grace devised the charming plan. Grace gave Jesus the unspeakable gift. It is by Grace we are called. By Grace we are justified. We are sanctified by Grace. By Grace we are preserved; and the top-stone of salvation, in the everlasting glory of the elect, shall be brought forth, shouting Grace! Grace! unto it.

It was the same grace that selected Noah from the great mass of the profane and wicked of that day. The nature of

* Infidels have pretended that the ark was not big enough to hold all the creatures, &c. but it appears from the calculations of learned men that it was amply sufficient. It was about 550 feet long, 90 feet wide, and 50 feet high; so that it contained near 43,000 tons of lading, and would hold more than 40 of our ships of 1,000 tons each. It was nearly as long as St. Paul's Church in London. And if all the animals together, as the learned have computed, would not be equal to 500 horses, there would surely be room enough, and to spare.

Noah was no better than that of others, but grace made him to differ. It is said, Gen. vi. 8, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." The like expression is used concerning Lot. When Sodom was destroyed, he was delivered—"the Lord being merciful to him." The salvation of the best men must be ascribed to God's mercy, not their own merit. Onesiphorus was a good man, but St. Paul prayed for him, "that he might find mercy of the Lord at the last day:" and it will then be manifest, with respect to all the redeemed, that it was "not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." Rom. ix. 15, 16.

The ark afforded perfect security. Noah being forewarned of the approaching flood, and having received full instructions how to build the ark, believed God, and obeyed. St. Paul, treating of faith, Heb. xi. mentions him as an eminent believer. "By faith, Noah, being warned of God, of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark, to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is of faith." Here is the way of salvation. God warns. The Christian believes the warning. He fears the misery threatened. He flies to the refuge provided, and there he is safe.

Believing that God would do as he said, he began to build the ark. It was a work of great labor, but he did not shun it on that account. It was an unexampled thing; he had no precedent for it; and it required no small courage and resolution to persist in the work. Reason might hesitate and form objections, but "the Lord hath said it," was an answer to them all. The world would despise him, and treat him as a visionary, romantic fool, who frightened himself, and wanted to frighten others, with ungrounded danger; but the power of faith carried him through every difficulty, and at the appointed season he received the end of his faith, even the salvation of himself and his family.

For now the hundred and twenty years are just expired. The long-expected day is just at hand—"for yet seven days, said the Lord, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living substance that I have made, will I destroy from off the face of the earth." Here was a fresh warning. While the time was distant, they disregarded it. But now there is only a week to turn themselves in; and this week was spent like the rest. We do not hear of one person converted in the last week. The week is

expired. And now the rain descends, not in drops, but torrents; and not for a few hours, but for six weeks together, without intermission. And not only were "the windows of heaven opened," but "the foundations of the great deep were broken up,"—the great abyss of waters under the earth, which hitherto God had confined by certain bounds, "that they might not pass over to cover the earth." Psalm civ. 9. But now these bounds are removed, and the waters cover the surface of the land.

"Probably, many of the profane scoffers, when they saw the increasing violence of the waters, came wading middle deep to the ark, earnestly craving admittance; but as they formerly rejected God, now they are justly rejected by him. Ere vengeance begins, repentance is seasonable; but if judgment be once got out, we cry too late. While the Gospel solicits us, the doors of the ark are open; if we neglect the time of grace, in vain we seek it with tears. God holds it no mercy to pity the obstinate. Others, more bold than they, hope to overrun the judgment; and, climbing up to the high mountains, look down upon the waters with more hope than fear. And now when they see their hills become islands, they climb up into the tallest trees; there with paleness and horror look for death, and study to avoid it, whom the waves overtake at last, half dead with famine, and half with fear. Lo! now from the tops of the mountains they descry the ark floating upon the waters, and behold with envy that which before they beheld with scorn."

In the mean time Noah sits secure in the ark. The torrents of rain battering on the roof, the swelling of the waves which bear him up, the bellowing of the dying beasts, and the shrieks of the expiring multitude, create neither disturbance nor fear. He, who "shut him in," had promised preservation; and while all was horror without, within all was safety, and peace, and praise.

And who ever trusted in the Lord, and was confounded? See the blessed effects of faith. "There is no condemnation to them who are in *Christ Jesus*," as Noah was in the ark. The law may thunder out its fearful curse. Satan, unwilling to lose his prey, may rage and roar. The world, condemned by the believer's faith, as once by Noah's, may frown, and fret, and persecute; but the believer is safe. "The law of the spirit of life, in *Christ Jesus*, hath made him free from the law of sin and death." "The Lord knoweth how to

deliver the godly out of temptation;" and well may he triumph over the world: for Christ hath said, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome it." Yea, when the king of terrors himself shall advance, secure in Christ the life, he may say, "O death, where is thy sting?"

O how enviable, to the distressed multitude, was now the favored situation of Noah. But, alas! it was too late. The same Almighty hand, which shut him in, had shut them out. Blessed be God, it is not so yet with any of us. The door of the ark is yet open; and the language of the Gospel is, "Come, thou, and all thy house, into the ark." This is what we are now to consider.

III. God graciously invites sinners to come into the ark.

When the mighty waters were fast increasing; when no hope appeared from any other quarter; how would it have rejoiced the people to hear such an invitation as this: "Come, perishing men and women. Come into the ark. Come, and bring all your dear little ones with you. Here is room enough, and to spare; and here you shall find a hearty welcome."

They were not favored thus: but, we are called. "Go ye forth into all the world," said Christ to his disciples, "and preach the Gospel to every creature." And what is this Gospel, but good news of a refuge from the storm, and a covert from the tempest? Pardon, safety, and eternal life, to every believer? Christ, the ordinance of God for complete salvation, to every one who sees his need of him, and wants to "fly from the wrath to come." So Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness: the people stung by fiery serpents beheld it, and lived. So the Israelites in Egypt, sprinkled their doors with blood, and the angel of death, who destroyed their enemies, beheld the peaceful sign, and preserved their lives. To this moment the gracious Redeemer is crying aloud by his word, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Come into the Ark, thou and all thy house. Parents, come not alone. Ask your sons and daughters to come along with you. They will be welcome, for Jesus still saith, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." O may God make you and them willing to come into the Ark!

APPLICATION.

How kind is God! Kind, in warning sinners, so long beforehand, of their dread-

ful danger. Kind, in providing an ark; in giving his Son to be a Savior. Kind, in inviting perishing men to come and be saved by him. O praise the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever.

But are we aware of the danger? Do we really believe there is a deluge of wrath coming upon sinners? Here most men fail. Sin is so pleasant, they are unwilling to think it destructive. But who shall we believe, the God of truth, or the father of lies? See the fate of these unbelievers. They would not believe God, and were therefore secure: but the flood came and took them all away. But Noah believed, was moved with fear, built an ark; and was saved. You have no ark to build. It is built already. Yet a few days, and the flood will come. Have not some large drops of affliction already fallen, to give you the necessary alarm? Lose no time, then. The very beasts will hurry home when a storm is at hand. O seek a shelter in Jesus, and nowhere else. Neither the mountains nor the trees could save the unbelievers of old. Nor is there a saving name in heaven or earth, but that of Jesus. Come thou then into the ark.

And what say the rest of your house? Shall the husband come, and the wife be shut out? or the wife enter, and the husband be excluded? Or, dear young people! shall your parents be safe in the ark, and you their children perish in the water? God forbid! O families, be concerned to be saved altogether. Come thou and *all* thy house into the ark; *servants* and all. If one be left behind, he perishes for ever. God make you willing to be saved.

And you, believers in Jesus, who are safe in the ark, rejoice in your security. Who can conceive what must have been the grateful feelings of Noah's heart, when the Lord shut him in; and especially, when all was over, and he came safely out. Such, however, are the grateful feelings of a believer safe in Christ, and a believer safe in glory. Blessed be God for Jesus-Christ!

PRAYER.—O God, we believe that thou wilt come to be our Judge. We believe that the storm of thine anger will burst on an ungodly world. We praise thee that thou dost so long spare thy rebellious creatures. Thou art not slack concerning thy promise, but art long-suffering to us-ward; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

We thank thee that thou hast provided an ark of safety for perishing men. We account it a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief. We fly for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us. Gladly and thankfully we enter the ark of salvation, and fain would we bring with us all that is dear to

us. O that all here present, husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, neighbors and friends, may come together into this blessed ark! We pray that not one may be left behind.

Thanks be unto God that yet there is room; that yet there is time and space for repentance; that still the preachers of righteousness are in his name inviting all who are ready to perish, to enter in and be saved! O let not these repeated invitations be in vain! Let not the present invitation be in vain! Do thou, O Lord, out of Zion, command the blessing, even life for evermore. Amen.

SERMON XL.

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST.

Philip. iii. 8.—The excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.

LIFE is short! It is a most serious reflection—Life is short! The weakness and folly of childhood, the vanity and vices of youth, the bustle and care of middle life, and the infirmities of old age (if we live to be old) what do they leave us? A short life indeed!

Yet, man has a soul of vast desires. He is capable of much, and aims at more. Many things he cannot attain, and many are not worth the pains. O, 'tis pity, that a man should not know how to choose the good and refuse the evil; how to make the most and the best of so short a life!

Now, there is an infallible guide. O that man would regard it! Once hath God spoken, yea, twice have I heard this—what is the chief end, the first business, the true interest of man?

JOB was a man truly wise and eminently good: he had deeply considered the nature and value of wisdom; but, he inquires, Where is it to be got? Men know where to get gold and silver; and get them they will, if possible, though at the hazard of life. *But where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding?* All nature falters in giving an answer; but God himself vouchsafes to give it. *To man he said,* perhaps to Adam the first man: however to us, to every man of us, he says, *The fear of the Lord, behold, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, that is understanding.* True religion is the true wisdom.

SOLOMON, deemed the wisest of men, speaks the same language; and thus concludes his book of dear-bought wisdom. *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; of what matter? The subject he*

proposed in the beginning of his book, What is the chief good? *What is that good for the sons of men, which they should do all the days of their life?* (Eccl. ii. 3.) And here we have it. *Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man,* or rather, *the whole of man*; his highest wisdom, his proper duty, his true excellence, his best interest.

But a greater than Solomon is here. What saith Jesus, “the wisdom of God,” Wisdom incarnate? *This is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent,* (John xvii. 3.) as if he had said, The way to eternal life; the earnest of it; the evidence of right and title to it; and the final enjoyment of it; consists in, and is connected with, the knowledge of the only true God, in opposition to all false gods; and in the like knowledge of Christ his Son, the only Mediator and Savior, in opposition to every other mediator, or pretended way of acceptance with God.

In our text, St. Paul adds his testimony to the former, the testimony of his own experience. He was a man of learning, and had been a zealot for the Jewish law, a hater of Christ, and a bloody persecutor of his church; but grace had renewed his mind and changed his heart; he no longer boasted of his works, or went about to establish his own righteousness; but the law became his schoolmaster, to bring him to Christ; through the law, he became dead to the law; now he desires to be found in Christ, and depends alone on his righteousness.

What things were *gain* to him, he counted *loss* for Christ; and that not only at his first conversion, but many years after, when he wrote this epistle, he was still of the same mind. “Yea, doubtless,” saith he, “I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” He gladly parted with all his carnal confidence, all his former reputation, and all his worldly enjoyments, for this excellent knowledge; and thought himself an immense gainer by the change.

The true knowledge of Christ is as excellent as ever. We ought to value it as much as Paul did; and that we may do so, let us consider,

1. What this knowledge is; and
2. The excellency of it.

1. Let us show what this knowledge is.

We may consider the knowledge of Christ as opposed to *Paganism*, to *Judaism*, and to the merely *National religion* of formal professors.

The knowledge of Christ stands opposed

to the ignorance of the heathen. "The world by wisdom knew not God." (1 Cor. i. 21.) The wisest Pagans, by their natural light and boasted philosophy, did not attain a true knowledge of God, and the way of salvation; "they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts were darkened." Witness, not only their altar "to the unknown God," but also the multitude of idols they worshipped; the absurd notions they entertained of their gods; and the horrid, bloody, and obscene rites of their worship.

The knowledge of Christ is to be distinguished from the knowledge of the law of Moses. "The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ." The religion of the Jews consisted much in rites and ordinances, which were obscure, compared with the religion of the Gospel. They had "the shadow of good things to come," we have the substance.

This knowledge is also something far superior to the speculative, unsanctified notions of nominal Christians, "who profess they know God, but in works deny him;" who have "the form of godliness, but deny the power;" who "name the name of Christ, but depart not from iniquity;" and to whom Christ will say, "Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I never knew you." That knowledge which Paul so much prized was truly valuable and useful, and, indeed, includes the whole of true vital religion. We may define it to be,

A *spiritual, supernatural, experimental, and practical* knowledge of Christ, in his person, character, and work; as revealed in the Gospel.

It is *spiritual*. It is the work of the Spirit of God to communicate it—"God shines into the heart." Believers have "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ:" (Eph. i.) and the words which he speaks to the soul "are spirit and life:" "it is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." John vi.

It is therefore *supernatural*; it is above nature. No man can give it; no natural man can receive it. We are assured, 1 Cor. ii. 14, that the *natural man*, (that is the animal or rational man; he who acts only upon principles of reason,) *receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*; that is, he does not embrace and approve them; *for they are foolishness to him*: through the darkness, pride, sensuality and depravity of his mind, he cannot reconcile them to his own mistaken views of things; and, therefore, condemns them as weak, irra-

tional, enthusiastic: the apostle adds; *neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*: for want of a renewed faculty, he cannot receive them; for they are perceived in their divine truth, beauty, and glory only by an understanding illuminated and rectified by the Spirit of God. What an eminent instance of this was St. Paul himself! Before conversion, no man hated the Gospel more; after conversion, no man loved it better; and, to this day, the change that takes place in the minds of men respecting gospel truth is little less remarkable.

It is *experimental*. Believers receive the "love of the truth;" they "taste that the Lord is gracious;" "as new-born babes they desire the sincere milk of the word;"—the faith which they mix with the word gives a subsistence and reality to the truth in their minds; so that it greatly differs from a bare speculation; the truth is in them, and the truth makes them free. Once more,

It is *practical*. Knowledge in Scripture is sometimes put for the whole of religion, and forms the grand distinction between the church and the world. Hence wicked men are often said "not to know the Lord;" as the sons of Eli, for instance, though they certainly had a speculative knowledge of the whole law. Knowledge often includes all its proper effects, as assent to the truth known; affiance in the person known; and that love to him, which secures obedience. Thus St. John speaks, Eph. i. 3, 4, "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; and thereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments."

The knowledge we speak of, and which St. Paul so much commends, is the knowledge of CHRIST. Christ is the object of it; *Christ Jesus my Lord*. It is a principal part of this knowledge to have right views of him; accordingly, we find our Lord himself catechising his disciples upon this point. Matt. xvi. "Whom do men say, that I, the Son of Man, am?" and again, "Whom say ye that I am?" To others he said, "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he?" Peter answered, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." This was a good answer, and he greatly commended it, saying, "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, which is in heaven." His knowledge of the person of Christ was supernatural: and our Lord, further to show the importance of it, adds—"Thou art Peter;" (which

signifies a *rock*;) and having mentioned his name, takes occasion to speak of this confession he made, this article of faith as the rock, or foundation, on which the whole New Testament Church shall be built. Indeed this is "the pillar and ground of truth; and without doubt, the great mystery of godliness, that Jesus Christ is God *manifest in the flesh*;" "the *WORD made flesh*, who dwelt among us."

The character, office, or work of Christ, is of equal importance. St. Paul's resolution was, "to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and *him crucified*." Christ *as crucified*, as a sacrifice and atonement, was his darling topic; though it was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks, he knew it to be "the power of God to salvation;" and, indeed, the names he mentions in the text include much the same: *Christ Jesus my Lord*. The word *Christ* signifies *Anointed*. Priests, and others, used to be anointed with oil, which denoted their fitness for the office, and their appointment to it; so Christ was anointed by the Father, filled with the Holy Spirit, and set apart by divine authority, to be the prophet, priest, and king of the church. The name *Jesus* signifies a *Savior*; it was given him "because he should save his people from their sins." And the apostle adds, *my Lord*: he acknowledges him to be the sovereign ruler of his people, head over all things; and calls him his, because he was his sworn servant.

The knowledge of Christ, includes an acquaintance with his whole character, as drawn out in the New Testament. Here we see his innocence, his benevolence, his zeal, and especially his regard to poor sinners: how readily he listened to the cry of misery, how graciously he relieved the sick, the poor, and the guilty, when they applied to him; in a word, we see his glory, "the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

But the knowledge of Christ also includes faith in him; according to that Scripture, Isa. liii. 11. *By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many*: this cannot mean the knowledge that is in Christ, but the knowledge of Christ that is in his people; and so stands for faith, which alone justifies a sinner in the sight of God. The true knowledge of Christ is always accompanied with faith in him, for "they that know his name will put their trust in him."

This then is that knowledge which St. Paul attained, and which he prized so highly, that he said, "I count all things

but loss" on account of it. Surely it must be most excellent in itself and in its effects, to be preferred above all things. If we saw a man willingly parting with all his property; selling his furniture, his house, his land for the sake of buying one single article; we must conclude, if we had a good opinion of his prudence, that the article was of extraordinary value. And this is no more than the Christian is expected to do, according to our Lord's parable, Matt. xiii. 45. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant, seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Such a merchant was our apostle. May divine grace make us such also! That we may see the wisdom of his conduct. Let us now proceed to consider,

II. *The excellency of this knowledge of Christ.*

1. It is the most *necessary* kind of knowledge. Of many things we must be ignorant, because we cannot attain the knowledge of them; and of many things we may safely be ignorant; but the knowledge of Christ is necessary to salvation. "That the soul be without knowledge, is not good." Prov. xix. 2. There can be no *faith* in Jesus without it, and without faith no salvation. There can be no *love* to Jesus without it, and if no love, no salvation. Indeed we may see how necessary it is by the pains which Satan takes to prevent the attainment of it; for he, as the god of this world, hath blinded the eyes of men, lest they should get this knowledge by the Gospel. On the other hand, we learn its necessity from Christ's zeal to extend the word of salvation; for God our Savior "will have all men (that is *all sorts* of men) to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." 1 Tim. ii. 4. Observe,—they must have the knowledge of the truth, in order to their being saved.

2. It is the most *heavenly* kind of knowledge. Every good gift comes down from God, but this especially. He who first created light in the world "shines into the heart of man." It is the Holy Spirit who takes the things of Christ, and shows them unto us. It is written in the prophets, and daily fulfilled in the Church: "All thy children shall be taught of God." The Spirit of God is the great teacher; but he teaches by the word. "To expect that the Spirit will teach you without the word is rank enthusiasm; as great madness as to hope to see without eyes; and to expect that the word will teach you without the Spirit is as great an absurdity, as to pre-

tend to see without light. God has joined the word and the Spirit together, and let no man put them asunder." We read of having "the eyes of our understanding enlightened," (Eph. i. 18.) and we read also of Christ's opening the understanding of his disciples, that they might "understand the Scriptures." It therefore becomes every one, who wishes for this heavenly knowledge, to pray with David, "O Lord, open mine eyes, that I may see wondrous things out of thy law."

3. It is the most *useful* kind of knowledge. Every kind of knowledge is useful in its place, for it is to the mind what light is to the eyes; but this knowledge exceeds all other in its blessed effects. What was it that made so vast an alteration in the heathen world, so that, from beasts and devils, they became holy saints and children of God? It was the Gospel, which "opened their eyes, and turned them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Hereby thousands and thousands escape the pollutions of the world. In this consists much of our regeneration; for the new man is "renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him." Col. iii. 10. And this renewing work is carried on by the same means; "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory." As the face of Moses got a heavenly lustre by converse with God, so, by the clear view of Christ's glory, in the looking-glass of the Gospel, we ourselves obtain something of his own amiable and holy likeness. O, the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, which makes us like Christ; and, depend upon it, the more you know him, the more you will be like him.

This knowledge will humble the soul. Other knowledge puffeth up. The rays of the sun, which show its own glory, discover the uncleanness of a room into which they shine; so this excellent knowledge at once makes manifest the glory of Christ, and the deformity of the sinner. *Isaiah*, upon beholding Christ, the Lord of Hosts, cries out, "Woe is me! I am unclean." *Job* also exclaims, "Behold I am vile:" and John fell at his glorious Savior's feet as one dead.

We observed before, that this knowledge is connected with *faith*: "they that know thy name will put their trust in thee." "It would be arrant folly to trust a stranger with our all: but the knowledge of Christ encourages the soul to confide in him. *In whom ye trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth*, saith St. Paul to

the Ephesians. None can trust him till they know him; and whoever knows him aright will trust him. Well may we trust him, when we consider his almighty power, his infinite love, his divine righteousness, and his perfect faithfulness. In the view of these, Paul, in the prospect of death, could say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him, against that day." "If we had a thousand souls, we might safely trust Jesus with them all.

4. This knowledge is, of all other, the most *pleasant*. Knowledge, in general, is grateful to the mind; and yet some kinds of knowledge are painful. Solomon says, "in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." Eccl. i. 18. There must be a great deal of pains to get it, and a great deal of care to keep it; the more we know, the more we see remains to be known; and the more we perceive of the folly, madness, and misery of men. But there are no such inconveniences attending this knowledge; it is more easily attained; and he that increaseth it increaseth his joy at the same time. "I rejoice at thy word," saith the Psalmist, "as he that findeth great spoil." "The law of thy mouth is to me better than gold or silver." "Thy word was found of me, and I did eat it, and it was the joy and rejoicing of my heart." What support does the afflicted Christian find in the Gospel of Christ! he may say, "Thy statutes have been my song in the days of my pilgrimage." Hear Paul and Silas singing aloud at midnight, in the jail of Philippi: it was the knowledge of Christ that made them sing. And thousands of dying believers have rejoiced in Christ, amidst the pains of dissolving nature, and even in the flames of martyrdom. How excellent then is this knowledge of Christ!

APPLICATION.

Is the knowledge of Christ so excellent, then, *Do we possess it?* St. Paul said to the Corinthians—"Some of you have not the knowledge of God; I speak it to your shame;" and a shame indeed it is, for those who have the means of knowledge, to remain destitute of it. And it is more than a shame, it is a sin; and a sin of the most fatal kind; it keeps us from the exercise of repentance, faith, love, and obedience: yea, our Lord makes it the grand cause of final ruin. "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

O think of this, while opportunity remains to obtain the knowledge of Christ. Seek it in the means of his appointment. "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God." Seek it earnestly according to the divine direction. Prov. iii. 3, 4. "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God; for the Lord giveth wisdom, he layeth up *sound wisdom* for the righteous."

And, O what cause have they for thankfulness, who have obtained this "sound wisdom," this most excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ! You cannot have a greater cause for joy. Christ himself giveth you joy of it. "Blessed are your eyes, for they see!" On a like occasion, "Jesus rejoiced, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." You have greater cause for joy and praise, than if you had got the knowledge of all languages, arts, and sciences; these might make you famous among men, but their advantage would be dropped in the grave. A very learned man once said on his dying bed, "I have spent my life in laborious trifling." He only is truly wise, who is "wise to salvation." In this excellent knowledge you are allowed to glory; for "thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me," &c. O be thankful to him, who hath called you out of darkness into this marvellous light.

But while you are thankful for it, do not be proud of it. The wisest know but little of what is to be known. "Follow on to know the Lord." "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ." Read the word, and meditate on it day and night. Pray over it, and pray for the Spirit to lead you into all truth. And while you praise him with your lips, remember also to praise him with your lives. Let it not be said, "What do you more than others?" But prove the superior excellency of your knowledge, by the superior excellency of

your conduct: "for, ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; *walk as children of light*, proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." Believers are appointed to be lights in the world: and much of their duty is comprehended in one word—**SHINE!** "*Let your Light*, says our Savior, *shine*, and shine before men too; that is not forbidden; yea, it is commanded. But it is thus commanded, *Let your light so shine before men, that they, seeing your GOOD WORKS*—yourselves as little as may be—your works more than yourselves, (as the sun giving us light, will scarcely suffer us to look upon itself)—*may glorify*—Whom? You? No, but *your Father, who is in heaven*. Let your light shine; it is given for that purpose; but let it always shine to the glory of *the Father of lights*."—Thus may you be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, until you see him, no more "through a glass darkly, but face to face;" until you know, even as also you are known.

Now unto God, the Father of lights—to Jesus Christ, the sun of righteousness, and the Holy Spirit of truth, be all glory, by every enlightened mind in heaven and earth, for ever and ever. Amen.

PRAYER.—O thou who art the Father of Lights, enlighten our minds, we beseech thee, that we may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. Enable us to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord. We bless thee that thou hast given us thy holy word, which is able to make us wise unto salvation. Remove, we beseech thee, all darkness from our minds, and all hardness from our hearts. May the Holy Spirit, by whose inspiration the Scriptures were written, lead us into all truth. May he enable us to discern the glory of Christ, and to comprehend, in some degree, that love which passeth knowledge. Grant, O Lord, that the word of Christ may dwell in us richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. May it give peace to our consciences, and holiness to our hearts. May we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Help us to walk as children of light, and to cause our light so to shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, may glorify thee our heavenly Father. Prepare us for the world of light and great glory, and that we may have increasing evidence of a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. We ask these blessings in the name of Jesus Christ, thy beloved Son, to whom, with thyself and the Holy Spirit, be glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON XLI.

THE HEART TAKEN.

Luke xi. 21, 22. When a strong man armed, keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils.

THE miracles which our Lord performed were so obvious, that it was impossible for his greatest enemies to deny them; but such was the malice of their hearts, that they said he performed them by the power of the devil. Our Savior, in answer to this, shows how unreasonable and absurd it is, to suppose that Satan should cast out himself, or any way oppose his own kingdom; "for every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against itself falleth." But in the text he shows how he had performed the miracle of casting out Satan, namely, by his superior power. He compares Satan to a strong man, armed with weapons to defend his house; and he compares himself to one that is stronger than the strong man. He allows that the devil is strong, but asserts that he is much stronger, and therefore able to cast him out. By this similitude our Lord vindicates his miracles, and proves he did not act in concert with Satan. But the words are also fairly applicable to Christ's continual victories over the devil in the hearts of men, by that power which still goes along with the preaching of the Gospel. They describe two things:

I. The sad condition of an unconverted sinner: and

II. The wonderful power of divine grace in his conversion.

1. Here is the sad condition of an unconverted sinner; his heart is the habitation of Satan; the faculties of his mind, and the members of his body, are Satan's *goods*; they are employed by him in the service of sin, and while this is the case, there is peace—a false and dangerous security; until Christ, by his Gospel, disturbs it, and by his grace delivers the prey from the hands of the mighty.

(1.) The human heart is a *palace*, a noble building; at first erected for the habitation of the great and glorious God, who made man "in his own image, after his own likeness," "in knowledge, righteousness and holiness." "But the holy God "has withdrawn himself, and left this "temple desolate. The stately ruins are "visible to every eye, and bear in their "front this doleful inscription—*Here God*

once dwelt. The comely order of this "house is turned into confusion; the "beauties of holiness into noisome impurities; the house of prayer into a den "of thieves; the noble powers of the soul, "designed for divine contemplation, and "delight, are alienated to the service of "base idols and despicable lusts. The "whole soul is like a ruined palace of "some great prince, in which you see, "here the fragments of a lofty pillar, there "the shattered remains of a curious statue, "and all lying neglected and useless "among heaps of dirt. The faded glory, "the darkness, the impurity of this palace, "plainly show *the great inhabitant is "gone!*" But,

(2.) The heart is now become the palace of Satan. Great is the power of the devil in this world, and over the minds of wicked men. This is an unwelcome truth; but it must be told. Our Savior himself calls him, John xiv. 30, *the Prince of this world*—he who rules in this kingdom of darkness, and who is also called, 2 Cor. iv. 4. *the god of this world*, because of the great interest he has in the world, and the homage that is paid to him by the multitudes in the world, and the great sway that, by divine permission, he beareth in the hearts of his subjects. The worship of the heathen is the worship of the devil. Those who worship Jupiter, Bacchus, Venus, or any other idol, do really worship the devil; and the foolish, filthy, and bloody rites and ceremonies of their worship are very fit for such devilish gods. But it is not among pagans only that he reigns. St. Paul assures us, Eph. ii. 2, that unconverted men "walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air—the *spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*"—those who are disobedient to God, are obedient to Satan: he works powerfully in them; they follow his suggestions; they comply with his temptations; they are subject to his commandments; and are "led captive by him at his will." This is a very awful state! People may be in it without knowing it. But all are in it *by nature*: all are *yet* in it, who "walk after the flesh, fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and of the mind."

The dwelling of Satan in a sinner is further insisted on in this chapter, verse, 24, &c. "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, *I will return to my house.*" There may be a partial and temporary reformation in a sinner; but without a real

change, the devil will resume his power, and "the last state of that man is worse than the first."

The heart of man is either God's house or Satan's. If God do not rule there by his Spirit, Satan does; and it may easily be known who rules. St. John plainly decides this matter, 1 John iii. 7. "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doth righteousness, is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil." Our Lord spake the same language to the wicked Jews. They boasted that they were Abraham's children, and the people of God; but he faithfully told them, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do." "Know ye not," saith the apostle Paul, Rom. vi. 16, "that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, *his* servants ye are, to whom ye obey; whether of *sin* unto death, or of *obedience* unto *righteousness*?" Sin is the devil's work, and death is the wages of sin. One person is under the power of drunkenness, another of uncleanness—another curses and swears, another lies, another steals. All these are Satan's drudges and slaves. Their slavery is the most abject in the world, and is worse than any other, for in other cases the poor slave longs for freedom, and gladly escapes if he can; but here the wretched sinner hugs his yoke, fancies music in his chains, and scorns the proposal of liberty. All this is owing to the power and craft of the devil, who

(3.) Endeavors by all means to keep possession—"the strong man armed keepeth the house;" and this he does by hiding from his vassals the fatal consequences of sin—by hindering any intercourse with the right owner, and by filling the heart with prejudice against him.

He keeps possession of the sinner's heart, by hiding from him the evil and wages of sin. He is called a *ruler of darkness*, he reigns in darkness, and by darkness. Sinners little think where he is leading them. "Surely, in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird." Prov. i. 17. The silly birds are wiser than sinners. Sinners are told of their danger, but to no purpose. Satan hath shut their eyes, and they are determined to keep them shut; "they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil; and how justly may a holy God doom that soul to everlasting darkness, who wilfully rejected the light of life.

Satan does all he can to prevent any intercourse between the sinner and the bless-

ed God, who is the original and rightful owner of the heart. Such is the love of God to his rebellious creatures, that he has sent his Son into the world to make reconciliation; and he has also sent his servants to publish the Gospel, or the ministry of reconciliation, "beseeching sinners, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled to God." But Satan dreads the effects of the Gospel, and therefore tries to hinder it. St. Paul says, "Satan hath blinded the minds of unbelievers, lest the light of the glorious Gospel should shine into them." He would keep the light of the Gospel out of the world, if he could; and he tries hard for it in some places, by his persecuting agents; but as he cannot do this, he will keep it out of men's hearts, if possible. He loves to keep men in ignorance and error. He persuades some to break the sabbath, and to forsake the house of God, and to neglect the Bible; and he keeps others in a state of wretched formality; they worship God with their bodies, but their hearts are far from him.

He fills the hearts of many with prejudices against Christ and the Gospel. Those who preach it, and receive it, generally go under some name of reproach, and are so misrepresented by ignorant, interested, and carnal persons, that they are afraid to hear and judge for themselves. Where open persecution is not permitted, this is one of Satan's principal means of keeping the possession of the sinner's heart. But this snare would be broken, if men would remember that it has always been the lot of good men to be despised—that Christ himself was treated in the same manner—that he tells all his followers to expect reproach: and calls upon them to rejoice and be exceeding glad on that account. Thus you see, that

(4.) Satan is but too well qualified to maintain his ground—he is compared to a *strong man*—and to a *strong man armed*. Devils are fallen angels, strong in their natural powers; vastly superior to men; and they have been long practised in the arts of destruction; they are like enemies flushed with victory, having succeeded in millions of instances, and were therefore not afraid to attack the innocent Jesus himself. Satan is *armed*; armed with astonishing cunning; he is "the old serpent that deceived the whole world!" armed with inveterate malice against God and against man: as a hungry and ravenous lion, he goeth about seeking whom he may devour.

We read in 2 Cor. x. 4. of Satan's *strong holds*—fortified places. Ignorance, preju-

dice, beloved lusts, evil habits, the way of the world, &c. are Satan's strong holds in the heart of some; vain imaginations, carnal reasonings, and proud conceits of self-righteousness, exalt themselves in others, against the knowledge of God; and by these means the devil keeps men from faith in Christ, and retains the possession of their hearts as his own property.

(5.) While the strong man, thus armed, keepeth his palace, *his goods are in peace*. There is, indeed, "no (true) peace to the wicked:" God hath not spoken peace: but sinners speak peace to themselves, and Satan, by wicked and carnal ministers, who are some of his best agents, speaks peace also. Carnal persons have generally a good opinion of themselves, and of their state; they think they have good hearts, are not so bad as others, and have no occasion to be uneasy. Just like St. Paul before his conversion—*I was alive*, said he, *without the law, once*. He thought if any man should go to heaven, he should. He trusted in his birth and education; his good church, and his good life: Satan, the strong man armed, had then full possession of his heart, and therefore all was quiet; "but when the *commandment* came;"—when the holy, fiery, spiritual law, Christ's pioneer, came, and showed him he was a sinner, a great sinner, the chief of sinners; then farewell this old peace, this false peace, this fatal peace; then he saw *what* he was, and *where* he was; and was glad to get peace from another quarter, even from the blood of Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

If a person is never uneasy about his sins, it is no good sign. It may be feared that Satan keeps his heart; for wherever the Gospel comes, though it be the Gospel of peace, it creates disturbance. It often occasions great agitation in a parish, in a family, and in the heart; and be not offended, brethren, if it do so among you. Jesus Christ has told us it will do so. Luke xii. 51. "Suppose ye that I am come to give *peace* on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather *division*"—"a *sword*"—"fire." Ver. 49. The Gospel certainly tends to promote peace with God and man; but through the carnal enmity of the natural man, it becomes an occasion of great discord. Wherever the Gospel was first preached by the apostles, it excited disturbance and persecution; and, to this day, where the true Gospel is newly preached, it makes no "small stir," and people are ready to say, as of old, "The men who have turned the world upside down are come hither also."

Satan will not quietly part with his prey; and ungodly men, who know not the nature and need of the Gospel, will oppose it.

The Gospel is designed to bring the heart to rest and peace in Jesus; but, as the soul must change masters, this revolution cannot be brought about without division.—There must be a separation of the heart from the creature, in order to its union with God; for peace with the world, and peace with God, are inconsistent.

Having thus shown you the first thing in the text, namely, the sad condition of an unconverted sinner, let us proceed to display,

II. The wonderful power of divine grace in his conversion—*when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted, and divided his spoils*.

Observe here, the greatness of the Conqueror, Jesus Christ; he alone is stronger than Satan. Strong as the devil is, he is but a creature, and his power is finite: Jesus Christ is the Creator, and his power is infinite. He made the world. This earthly ball, the glittering stars, the silver moon, and the glorious sun, are all the work of his hands; and by his power all nature stands; "in him all things consist;" "for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, and to him be glory for ever, Amen." This glorious and gracious God "was manifested in the flesh," he took our feeble nature, and became a man, that he might "destroy the works of the devil," and rescue his people from Satan's destructive hands.

See him in the wilderness encountering this hellish foe; he was tempted in all points like ourselves; but he vanquished the enemy, and he fled from him. See him displaying his superior power in casting out devils from the bodies of many miserable people. They could never resist his command. By a single word he relieved multitudes who had long been oppressed by Satan, and whose bodies, as well as souls, had been his habitation. He gave a portion of the same power to his disciples, who, returning from their mission, joyfully cried, "Even the devils are subject unto us through thy name!" "I beheld," said he, "Satan fall as lightning from heaven." Thus was "the prince of this world judged." The conquest was completed when he hung on the cross; and the triumph was celebrated when he rose to the skies—"he spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly;" "he led captivity captive, and received gifts for men."

The power of Christ over Satan was displayed in every country where the Gospel was preached. The heathens became ashamed of their idols, and the altars of their gods were deserted. Those oracles, in which, perhaps, Satan had been suffered to speak, were struck dumb; the most abandoned of mankind were reformed and renewed, and the world was astonished at the triumphs of the cross. For it was not by the force of human laws, it was not by the edge of the sword, nor was it by the power of eloquence, that the Gospel prevailed; no, "the weapons of this warfare were not carnal," and however mean they seemed in the eyes of men, they were "mighty, through God, to pull down the strong holds of the devil." Every man who knew its nature, and felt its effects, would say with the apostles, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth;" "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ; by which the world is crucified to me, and I to the world."

As the strong man was armed, Jesus Christ is also armed. So speaks the Psalmist, "Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O "most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty; and in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, meekness, and righteousness; and let thy right hand teach thee terrible things: Thine arrows are "sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, "whereby the people fall under thee." Psal. xlv. 3—5. Here Christ is described as a warrior armed for the field. The sword is "the word of Christ," or the Gospel; with this weapon he prevailed, and made his "glory and majesty" known throughout the world, subduing idolatry and iniquity to the faith and temper of the Gospel, and thus rescuing his elect from the power of the devil.

In this conquest, Christ "takes away the armor," on which so much dependence was placed. By the teaching of the Holy Spirit, he takes away the scales of ignorance which covered the eyes; the soul discovers its danger and ruin. He renews the will, for his people are "made willing in the day of his power:" they are glad to quit the service of their old master, and, "willingly yield themselves unto the Lord." Thus is that prophecy of Isaiah fulfilled, "I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong." Isaiah liii. 12. Having conquered Satan, he takes possession. Much of the glory of Christ consists in the vast multitudes of redeemed souls becom-

ing his faithful subjects and humble followers. Subdued by his grace, they give up themselves to him to be saved, taught, and governed: thus he "sees the travail of his soul," the fruit of his sufferings: and thus "the pleasure of the Lord prospers in his hands."

"He divideth the spoil." As a conqueror takes possession of the enemy's property, so Christ, having subdued the sinner, now possesses what was before at the disposal of Satan. It is a sad truth, that whatever gifts a natural man has, they are applied to the purposes of sin; his wealth, his wisdom, his time, his influence, and all that he hath. How reasonable is it then, that the saved sinner, constrained by the mercies of God, should present his body a living sacrifice to the Lord, holy and acceptable; it is, indeed, his reasonable service, and the poet's sweet language will be cordially adopted:

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small:
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

APPLICATION.

Whose habitation we are? Christ's or the devil's? One or the other rules in our hearts. Every man is under the influence of the good Spirit of God, or the evil spirit of the devil. "Know ye not that ye are the temples of the Holy Ghost?" said the apostle to the first Christians. So we may say to wicked men, Know ye not that ye are the temples of Satan, the Spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience? Does *sin* or *Christ* reign in you? What is your leisure time devoted to? What are your affections set upon? Is it upon vanity, pleasure, the lusts of the flesh? while Christ and his great salvation are neglected, the soul forgotten, sin indulged, prayer omitted, religion despised? O, sirs! your case is dreadful. You may, perhaps, laugh at all this; you may even say there is no such a being as the devil; that the Scriptures speak in a figurative way, and use strong eastern figures. But you may as well deny that you have a rational spirit within you, as deny the existence of good and evil spirits without you. Our Lord teaches us daily to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil;" or, as it might be rendered—*the evil one*. O that you might put up that prayer from your heart! O that you had a wish to be delivered from his power! for if you should live and die under it, you must hear that awful sentence from the mouth of Christ, "Depart from me, ye cursed,

into everlasting fire, prepared for *the devil and his angels*." Horrible company! frightful association! Yet how just! Sinners hearkened to his temptations, and they must partake in his torments. His works they would do, his wages they must receive. In this life they joined with devils against God and holiness: in the other, they must be shut up with them for ever. O that men would consider this in time; renounce the devil and his works, and open the door of their hearts to the Lord! why should men choose that company in this world, which they would abhor in the next? Those who hate the company of the religious now, will not be troubled with it hereafter; but as ungodly company is their delight now, they will have a miserable eternity to pass with it: and let those who foolishly invoke the devil to take them, soberly consider, that the company so often invited will be terrible when it comes.

But, O believer in Jesus, hail! thou art happily delivered. Adore and love the great Deliverer. Had not he interposed, had he not conquered Satan for thee on the cross, and led thee by his Spirit, thou hadst still been his wretched vassal. When Jesus had cast the devil out of a man, who had been miserably treated by him, he was so transported with love and gratitude, that he besought him, "that he might be with him." Luke viii. 38; he longed to enjoy his company, as Mary Magdalene and others whom he had healed did; but our Lord saw fit to deny him this request; and ordered him "to return to his own house, and show what great things God had done for him." Go, Christian, and do likewise. Let him "publish throughout the whole city, how great things Jesus has done for thee."

The castle of the human heart,
Strong in its native sin,
Is guarded well in every part,
By him who dwells within.

Thus Satan for a season reigns,
And keeps his goods in peace;
The soul is pleas'd to wear his chains,
Nor wishes a release.

But Jesus, stronger far than he,
In his appointed hour
Appears, to set his people free
From the usurper's power.

The rebel soul that once withstood
The Savior's kindest call,
Rejoices now, by grace subdu'd
To serve Him with her all.

OLNEY HYMNS.

of wrath, and children of the wicked one. We are ashamed and confounded when we think that our hearts, which should have been consecrated to thee, have been the dwelling place of Satan; and that we have been led captive by him at his will. But, O most gracious God, deliver us, we beseech thee, from his dominion. We bless thee that thy dear Son was manifested to destroy the works of the Devil: we rejoice that he subdued the great enemy, and is able to make us also more than conquerors. Grant that we may enjoy the glorious liberty wherewith Jesus Christ makes his servants free. May we be delivered from the condemnation of sin by the blood of Jesus, and from its reigning power, by the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. May our hearts now become the temples of the Holy Ghost. May he seal us unto the day of complete redemption, and be to us the earnest of the heavenly inheritance! May Satan be subdued under our feet; and may we be admitted into that world where temptation and trial shall be known no more. We ask it in the name of our dear Redeemer, to whom, with thyself, and the Divine Spirit, be glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON XLII.

CHRIST IS ALL.

Colossians iii. 2. But Christ is all.

THE necessity of having *some* religion is generally admitted, even by the most ignorant and profane. All agree that we ought to be religious; but what true religion consists in, is very much disputed. Every man forms a system for himself, and then flatters himself it must be right. But as there are various schemes, which contradict each other, we are sure that they cannot all be right. How then shall we judge whether they are right or wrong? I answer, the Gospel is our only rule. Bring every thing called religion to this touchstone. Bring it to this text, *Christ is all*; that is, in true Christian religion, Christ is all; he is the sum and substance of it; the beginning and the end of it.

St. Paul is here speaking of a conduct agreeable to the Christian profession; he is recommending to the Colossians the mortification of all corrupt affections; to "put off the old man of sin," and to "put on the new man of grace;" for a true Christian is "a new creature;" and in this state of renovation, or under the present Gospel dispensation, he says, "there is neither Greek nor Jew; circumcision, nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but *Christ is all and in all*:" that is, under the Gospel, God has no partial respect to persons, on account of their country, their religious forms, customs, or situations in life: Christ has taken away

PRAYER.—ALMIGHTY and most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature children

all partition walls, and men of all sorts stand on the same level before God, both as to duty and privilege; and for this reason, Christ is the all of a Christian, let him be who he may, Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, master or servant; his whole salvation, hope, and happiness, from first to last. The words then teach us the grand truth, that,

In the religion of the Gospel, Christ is all.

This is the general language of Scripture. Whatever we want in religion, we must have it from Jesus. So St. Paul speaks, 1 Cor. i. 30. "Christ is made unto us, *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.*" We are ignorant and foolish in the things of God; Christ, by his word and Spirit, is made *wisdom* to us. We are guilty sinners, liable to God's wrath; he is made *righteousness* to us, he is our great atonement and sacrifice. We are depraved and corrupt, he is made *sanctification* to us; he is the source of all grace, and "out of his fullness we receive grace for grace." We must die and see corruption; but, if united to him, he shall raise us up again, and deliver us from the power of the grave, and so be made *redemption* to us. Thus is he our *all*, that "no flesh should glory in his presence," but that, as "Christ is all," Christ may have all the glory.

Whatever we want in religion, we have in Christ. To be *accepted* of God; to be *sanctified* in heart and life; and to be made *happy* here and hereafter, are the great things we seek in religion. In Jesus we have them all.

I. Jesus Christ is all in our *justification*.

We are sinners. We have broken the holy law of God, and by so doing we have exposed ourselves to the dreadful curse of the law, and to the terrible wrath of an offended God. However easy and secure ignorant sinners may be, it is a certain truth, that sin renders us liable to wrath. Fornication and uncleanness: drunkenness and covetousness, shut men out of the kingdom of God. "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." Ephes. v. 3. 6. And O, who can tell the power of his anger? "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Now when the blessed God intends mercy for a sinner, he opens his eyes to behold his true condition. He perceives that he has to do with a most holy God, who hates sin, and will certainly punish it. He sees plainly that he is a sinner, a great

sinner, a rebel against God. He is alarmed, and justly too. His fears are well grounded; and in the manner of persons terrified at the approach of danger, he cries out, What shall I do to be saved? Is salvation possible? How may I get it? I would fly from the wrath to come, but, whither must I fly?

To a person in this state the Gospel is welcome indeed! It affords glad tidings of great joy. It sets before the distressed sinner, just *exactly* what he wants, A SAVIOR, mighty and ready to save; to "save to the uttermost," all who come unto God by him.

Some, indeed, who are under concern of soul, do not at first see that Christ must be all, in their coming to God. Sensible of sin and afraid of hell, "they go about for a time to establish their own righteousness." "I have been a wicked sinner, saith one, but I will reform my life, and if I do my best, will not that suffice? I will be sorry for what is past, and amend in future. I will be religious, devout, and charitable; will not God then accept me?"

I answer by another question, Is this making Christ *all*? No; it is making him *nothing*. Christ alone is a sinner's righteousness. See what the Scriptures say on this head.

Is the wrath of God due to sin? *Christ hath delivered us from the wrath to come.* 1 Thess. i. 10. Does the holy law denounce a curse against every transgressor? *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.* Gal. iii. 13. Can there be no remission of sin without shedding of blood? *Christ hath shed his blood for the remission of sins.* Matt. xxvi. 28. Does the law require of us a perfect righteousness? *Christ was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* 2 Cor. v. 21. Are we far from God? *He died, the just for the unjust, to bring us unto God.* 1 Peter iii. 18. Are we, as sinners, abominable to God, and justly rejected? If believers in Christ, *we are accepted in the Beloved.* Eph. i. 6. Are we every way imperfect in ourselves?—*We are complete in him.* Col. ii. 10. Are we pursued by the law? *We have fled for refuge to lay hold on (Christ) the hope set before us in the Gospel.* Heb. vi. 16. Are we filthy by reason of sin? *The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin.* 1 John i. 7.

These Scriptures, and many more which might be quoted, show, that in the grand affair of a sinner's justification, or acceptance with God, *Christ is all*. Nothing

more is needed; and every thing else must be rejected. No works or righteousness of our own have any thing to do in this matter. Good works are the proper fruits of faith, and necessary in their place; but in a sinner's pardon and acceptance with God, let Christ alone be exalted; for *by grace are we saved, through faith: not of works, lest any man should boast.* Ephes. ii. 8, 9.

2. Jesus Christ is all in our sanctification.

It is admitted, on all hands, that men should be good and holy. Morality, at least, is thought necessary; but the Scriptures go farther, and require, not only morality of conduct, but holiness of heart; and declare, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord," or go to heaven. But the great matter is, how shall this holiness be got?—Many think that the free will and natural powers of man, properly excited by fear of punishment and hope of reward, will produce it. But this is a great mistake. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." In this business then of sanctification, as well as in that of justification, we shall prove that Christ is all.

"Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit on the souls of believers, purifying their natures from the pollution of sin; renewing them in the image of God; and enabling them, from a principle of grace, to yield obedience to him; and all this is done by virtue of the life and death of Jesus Christ, and the union of believers to him."

Many devout persons take pains to reform and purify their hearts and lives without sufficiently looking to Christ. They think that they must be justified by the righteousness of Christ, but they must be sanctified by a holiness wrought out by themselves, which, as one says, "is like squeezing oil out of a flint." They are not aware that sanctification is by receiving a new nature from above, and by union to Christ himself. Christ dwells in the hearts of believers; they are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." It is therefore by virtue derived from him that we become holy. "Abide in me, saith Jesus, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me; for without me, ye can do nothing." John xv. 5. Thus "Christ is made unto us sanctification." He procured it for us; it is one of the fruits of his death; what he designed, in dying for us; "he

gave himself for us, that he might purify us unto himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Titus ii. 14. It is one of "the spiritual blessings with which we are blessed in him;" a special part of his salvation. All the springs of our sanctification are in him; and they are communicated to us by the constant agency of the Spirit of Christ, who dwells in all believers.

The example of Christ is also the grand rule of our sanctification. "We are predestinated to be conformed to his image," that "as he was, so we may be in this world." He is proposed to us in the Gospel, in the purity of his nature, in the glory of his graces, and in the usefulness of his conversation, as the holy example which we should constantly imitate. It was one design of his coming into our world, that we might have before our eyes, in our own nature, a perfect model of love to God and man; of holiness, innocence, meekness, patience, devotion, and zeal. Nor is he a Christian, except merely in name, who does not daily strive to follow him, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Happy would it be for Christians, if they labored more to be like Christ; and by constantly meditating on the beauty of holiness in him, they would be "changed into the same image from glory to glory."

The word of Christ is the great instrument of our sanctification. By the word of Christ we are begotten again, and by the same word we are nourished unto eternal life. When our Savior prayed for the sanctification of his disciples, he mentioned the means or instrument thereof; "Sanctify them through *thy truth*; thy word is truth." It is the truth of the Gospel, the knowledge of Christ as our Redeemer and Savior, that the Lord blesses for our purification. We must indeed study the law, as contained in the ten commandments, not in order by our obedience to it to obtain heaven, but to learn its spirituality and purity, to be made sensible of our inability to obey it perfectly, and then to see Christ as the fulfiller of the law, that we may live by faith in his righteousness. Confidence in Jesus, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, and hope of glory, will wonderfully contribute to our growth in holiness. And thus it appears that Jesus Christ is all in the matter of our sanctification.

3. Christ is all in respect of *true happiness*, both here and hereafter.

That man is a miserable creature, few will deny; and that sin alone has made

him such, none will deny, who know the Scriptures. It is, therefore, only the removal of what made him miserable, that can ever make him happy again; and none can do this but Jesus Christ. Sin has blinded the eyes of men in their pursuit of good. They seek the living among the dead; like Satan himself, "they wander about seeking rest, and finding none." On the contrary, sin produces misery. The pleasures of sin are momentary, but followed by long and tedious hours of painful reflection and remorse. Envy, and wrath, and anger, and malice, frequently raise a storm in the sinner's bosom; and many a gay worldling feels, at times, a foreboding and dismal prelude of that "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," which will be the sinner's portion in hell.

But, O the matchless mercy of God our Savior! "He remembered us in our low estate." He looked down from heaven with an eye of compassion. He pitied our miserable condition, and determined upon our relief. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich."

The religion of the Gospel is calculated to make man happy. "The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Rom. xiv. 17: that is, in the righteousness of faith, and true holiness in heart and life; in solid peace of conscience, through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, and a peaceable temper towards others, under a sense of God's being at peace with us; and in holy, heavenly joy and consolation, in communion with God, and lively expectation of eternal glory.

Christ is the author of true peace. It does not arise from a Christian's good opinion of himself and his duties; not his good heart; or his good frame; or his good deeds; not from any thing done by him, or wrought in him; but from what Christ has done and suffered: from the glory of his person, the love of his heart, the perfection of his righteousness, and the fullness of his grace. The believer looks not at, depends not upon himself, but upon Jesus; and draws all his safety and happiness from him. "His conscience says, I will have nothing to do with any thing, for salvation, but the righteousness of Jehovah Jesus, and his atonement on the tree. His heart says, This is all my salvation and all my desire. Hope says, I have cast anchor in Jesus, I cannot be disappointed. Fear says, I would not for the world offend my God and Father. Thus the whole

man bows in subjection to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the miserable sinner becomes a happy believer, and Christ is all in all."

Abundant is the provision made in the covenant of grace for the present happiness of the Christian in his way to heaven; and look at this which way you will, Christ is the sum and substance of it. Many are the great and precious promises made to believers, and "all the promises are in him, Yea, and in him Amen." The Christian's state is safe, because Christ is his keeper, his sheep are in his hand, and none shall ever pluck them thence.

And as much of the believer's comfort is conveyed to him through the channel of ordinances, let it be observed, that in them also Christ is all in all. Does he *pray*? he cannot live without it; but Christ is the life of his prayers. He only is the way to the Father: the new and living way into the holiest of all, by which he has access with boldness and confidence, being encouraged to ask what he will, and expect what he asks. Does he offer *praise*? The chief matter of it is, "Blessed be God, who hath blessed me with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus." He sees all temporal blessings flowing to him through Jesus, and is thankful for them; but his highest note of praise is—"Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!" Does he *read or hear the word*? he loves it because it is "the word of Christ," and no preaching has any sweetness in it, if Jesus is forgotten, or slighted.

Look at the *sacraments*, and you will find them saying, Christ is all. What is *baptism*, but a declaration of our misery by sin, our need of Christ as a purifier, belonging to him? We are "baptized unto Christ," we are "buried and risen with Christ," we "put on Christ." The *Lord's Supper* was instituted to be a memorial of Christ; the bread is the communion of his body, and the cup the communion of his blood. This ordinance shows us that Christ is the food of our souls, sufficient to nourish them unto eternal life; and is intended to stir up and strengthen believers to receive and feed upon him in their hearts, by faith with thanksgiving.

As Christ is the Christian's all, through life, so is he especially his all in a *dying hour*. In that important season, creatures, however useful before, are no longer of any use. What can then support the soul, just entering into eternity, but a precious Christ! It is his death that takes away the sting of death. It is the hope of being *with him*, and being *like him*, that reconciles the believer to the great change: to-

gether with his faithful promise, that "of all the Father hath given him, none shall be lost, and he will raise them up at the last day." Through Christ alone it is that the dying Christian may, and often does, triumph, saying, "O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!"

We go one step further, and add, that in heaven itself, Jesus Christ is all in all. It is his glorious presence that brightens and cheers the heavenly world. "I have a desire to depart, and to be with Christ," said St. Paul. This was what he thought "far better" than all his spiritual enjoyments and useful employments below. Yea, Christ himself expresses his most affectionate desires for the happiness of his people, by saying, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be *with me*, where I am, that they may behold my glory." It is an infinite mercy to be *in Christ*, this is our security; it is an unspeakable favor to have *Christ with us*, this is our chief happiness on earth; but the blessing that completes and crowns the whole is, to be *with Christ*, for ever and ever. There all the millions of the redeemed shall be of one heart and of one mind, and with one voice concur to sing that Jesus Christ is all in all.

APPLICATION.

1. FROM what has been said, it appears how erroneous, unscriptural, defective, and destructive, every system of religion must be, wherein Christ is not all. Look around you; such systems will readily be found in which Christ is not all; in which he is little or nothing. The mere moral scheme, or the notion of men's being saved by their good works, deprives him of all his glory, and renders the expense of his precious blood a needless waste; "for if righteousness come by the law, Christ is dead in vain." Gal. ii. 21. Beware of every doctrine that would lessen the honor of Jesus, and your regard to him. You cannot raise him too high, or exalt him too much, for he is all in all.

2. Let every one of us then examine his own religion by this rule. What is Christ to me? Do I prize and esteem him above all, as "the chief of ten thousands, and altogether lovely?" In the all-important concern of approaching to God, and seeking *acceptance* with him, what do I, a guilty, filthy, helpless sinner, look to and rest upon? Is it Jesus alone? Is he *my* all in coming to God? In the grand affair of *sanctification*—the love of God and the love of man—do I consider this as a part of the salvation that is in Christ, as pre-

pared for me, and laid up in Jesus to be received daily out of his fullness by faith? And as to *my happiness* in this world of misery, do I draw it out of the broken cisterns of perishing creatures, or from the unfailing and boundless ocean of divine love? Do I daily endeavor to walk with God as *my God*, reconciled to me, in Jesus; trusting in him for all needful blessings, to keep me safe, and render me happy; seeing all my affairs in his hands, working together for my good, and leading me forward, step by step, to his blessed presence, where there is fullness of joy and pleasure for ever more? Happy, thrice "happy is the man that is in such a case; yea, happy is that man whose God is the Lord." Ps. cxliv. 15.

How rich is the believer! He who has Christ, has *all*, for Christ is all. *All are yours*, says the apostle, *whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours.* 1 Cor. iii. 22. The various gifts of Christian ministers are yours; the government of the world is upon the shoulders of Christ, who is "Head over all things to the church:" your *lives* are given you for a blessing, whether they be long or short, prosperous or adverse; death itself, the king of terrors, is disarmed of its sting! and in whatever form it comes, it comes to be your eternal gain. All *present* things, spiritual or temporal, comfortable or afflictive, work together for your good; every occurrence yet before us in this world is wisely adjusted by infinite love: and, to crown all in the future world, there is "an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved for you," and ready to be revealed.

On the other hand, how poor, how miserably poor, is the carnal worldling, the careless sinner, the man who lives "without Christ in the world?" He has nothing, let him possess what he may. Could he call both the Indies his own, he is "poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked:" even now he feels an aching void, and death will soon convince him that all is vanity and vexation of spirit. O that you may be wise in time! Behold this glorious Savior stands at the door of your hearts, and sues for admission. O consider the matter well, before it be too late. "Have you sins, or have you none? If you have, whither should you go, but to the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world? Have you souls, or have you none? If you have, whither should you go, but to the Savior

of souls? Is there a life to come, or is there not? If there is, whither should you go, but to him, who only hath the words of eternal life? Is there a wrath to come, or is there not? If there is, whither should you go, but to him who only can deliver from the wrath to come? And will he not receive you? If he yielded himself into the hands of them that sought his life, will he hide himself from the hearts of them that seek his mercy? If he was willing to be taken by the hand of violence, is he not much more willing to be taken by the hand of faith? O come, come, come! I charge you come. I beseech you come. Come, and he will give you life. Come, and he will give you rest. Come, and he will receive you. Come as thou art, come poor, come needy, come empty." Christ is all, and has all, and will give thee all, to make thee happy now and for ever.

To him, who is all, be all glory, now and ever. Amen.

PRAYER.—God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we bless thee for all the gifts thou hast bestowed upon us; but most of all we bless thee for thine unspeakable gift. May we have a deep and humbling sense of our need of all those blessings which the Gospel reveals. May we be enabled to seek them, as thy free gifts through the blessed Redeemer. We are ignorant creatures, grant that Christ Jesus may be made unto us wisdom: we are guilty, may he be made to us righteousness; we are unholy, may he be made to us sanctification; we must soon die and see corruption, may he be made to us complete and eternal redemption. Grant, O Lord, that we may enjoy the blessedness of being united by faith to thy dear Son, that we may from his fullness daily derive grace for grace; through him may we obtain strength for every duty, succor in every temptation, support in every trial, and at last, victory over death itself. Hear these our petitions, O God of love, for the sake of our Advocate and Mediator Jesus Christ, unto whom be glory, world without end. Amen.

SERMON XLIII.

APOSTASY FROM CHRIST TO BE DREADED.

John vi. 68. Then said Jesus unto the twelve. Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.

THESE words were occasioned by a remarkable falling off among the followers of the Lord. Vast numbers of people attended his ministry, and no wonder. The sanctity of his character, the benevolence of his heart, the amazing miracles that he wrought, and especially his sweet, heavenly, powerful manner of preaching, could

not but excite great multitudes to follow him. Thousands and thousands listened to him with pleasure; and yet the number of his genuine disciples was very small.

Having performed an amazing miracle, in feeding five thousand people with five loaves, the people were satisfied that he was the Messiah, and determined to make him a king. Our Lord withdrew, and crossed the sea. The people followed him; when he took occasion to deal very closely with them, and to point out the cause of their not coming to him for life. This gave them great offence; but it proved who were his true disciples, and that the rest were such only in pretence. The whole of his conference with them displays the faithfulness of Christ, and the fickleness of men.

The words of our text are very affecting. Many of his nominal disciples having left him, he puts the question to the twelve apostles, "Will ye also go away?" Will you follow their example; or will you abide with me? Peter, in the name of the rest, dreading the thought of apostasy, answered, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life;" we can never expect so much happiness from another. And he answered well: for those who forsake Christ will never mend themselves, go where they will.

The words may be usefully applied to ourselves. Let us consider Jesus as putting the same question to us; and we may, with Peter's sincerity, make the same reply.

1. Let us consider the question, "Will ye also go away?"

This question was put to persons who had professed some regard for Christ. They had seen his miracles with admiration. They had heard his preaching with delight; and they had crossed the lake to meet him again. The same question therefore, as put to us, supposes a professed regard for Christ, as set before us in the Gospel; for if we have not in some sense come to him, of course we cannot forsake him. But as the people of old followed him from false motives, and with wrong views, it may be proper for us to consider what it is that makes many among us profess to follow him. And it is plain that the little profession which some make is the mere effect of custom. They are Christians, because their parents were such, and because their neighbors are such. It is the religion of the country; and were these people in Turkey, they would be Mahometans. The influence of superiors or friends sometimes brings them

to hear the Gospel, and the love of novelty keeps them under it for a time. Some persons are much struck with the fervency of a minister of Christ, who speaks in earnest and from the heart; while the seriousness, the fervor, and the singing of a lively congregation, make an additional impression. Self-interest and worldly advantage make other men professors: as the people referred to in our text followed Christ for the loaves and fishes. A few others were alarmed by sickness and the fear of death, or affected at some public calamity.

But if a person's religion has no better foundation than these afford, we wonder not at his apostasy. Sooner or later, such professors will go back, and follow Christ no more. And the world abounds with temptations, which will be fatal to those who have not "the root of the matter" in them: It may be profitable to point out some of these.

Persecution frightens some. Our Lord has bid us expect opposition in following him, for "they who will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." We must "take up the cross," if we follow him; and those who sit not down to count the cost, will be offended when the trial comes. If relations and friends are angry and frown upon them, if superiors and employers withdraw their favors, if their neighbors ridicule and laugh at them, they begin to repent of becoming religious. They regard man more than God, and resolve to be religious only so far as may consist with their worldly ease and advantage. These are the people described by our Lord in the parable of the sower, Matt. xiii. 20. "He that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it. Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended."

Worldly pleasures, worldly cares, and worldly connexions, make others forsake Christ. The Christian life is a spiritual life. Whoever is led by the Spirit, will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, nor walk according to the flesh. "If we live after the flesh, we perish; but if we, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live." If we are Christians indeed, the world will be crucified to us, and we to the world; and though we are in it, we shall not be of it. But if the professor forgets this, and is drawn by degrees into self-indulgence, if he gets a taste for gaiety and public amusements, if

he can visit the play-house, and sit down at the card-table, he will gradually lose the savor of the Gospel; and finding a manifest contradiction between the two masters he serves, he will soon quit one of them. He cannot follow Christ and the world too.

Excessive cares are almost as dangerous. They distract the mind, and make it unfit for religious duties. They steal away the heart from Christ. Anxiety about the world perplexes the mind: and they who "will be rich," and determine, at all events, to make a fortune, usually make such compliances with that view, as are inconsistent with their profession; they "fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." 1. Tim. vi. 3. Thus our Lord saith, "he also that receiveth seed among the thorns, is he that heareth the word; and the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful."

Worldly connexions ruin others. It is a precept of great importance, but too little regarded: "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers." Christians should marry "only in the Lord." How many "have made shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience," by neglecting this rule; and by presuming upon their ability both to keep their own ground, and influence their partner also! When Lot was about to leave Sodom, the angels bid him give warning to all his relations of the destruction that was coming; accordingly "he went to his sons-in-law, who married his daughters, and said, Up! get ye out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city; but he seemed to them as one that mocked." Thus the two daughters who had married carnal men perished, while the two who were with him at home, escaped the fire with their father. Gen. xix.

Familiarity with worldly men has a bad influence on the mind. "They that feared the Lord, in old times spake often one to another;" the primitive Christians were much together, "and continued daily in social religion; and while they did so, they were edified and multiplied. But if professors needlessly associate with wicked and vain persons, they will soon resemble them, learn their manners, and go back from Christ.

Negligence in religious duties is another cause of apostasy. The means of grace are of divine appointment; they are wisely calculated to promote the life of God in the soul; and they have the prom

ise of the Lord's blessing to make them effectual. They cannot therefore be slighted without injury. As the body must suffer, if there be not proper attention to wholesome food; so the soul must be injured, if ordinances be omitted, or carelessly attended. Declensions in religion usually begin in the closet, then extend to social duties, and at length to the duties of the Sabbath and the house of God. Be not *slothful* then; but "be diligent;" followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

The falls and divisions of some professors have a very ill effect upon others. It is common for beginners in religion to entertain too high an opinion of serious characters, and to place too much confidence in them; and if any of these miscarry, they are hurt, and rashly conclude that there is no reality in religion. But they forget that there was a *Judas* among the twelve, and in every age there have been apostates; "nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, the Lord knoweth them that are his." But "woe to the world," and to ignorant professors of this sort, "because of offences; for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh."

This chapter will furnish us with another common cause of apostasy. We shall find that it was *the Doctrine of Christ* which offended those "many disciples who went back, and walked no more with him." Let us see what this offensive doctrine was.

The multitude had followed him because of the miraculous entertainment he gave them. This raised their hopes of his being a temporal king, and of their getting rich in his service. Our Lord, who knew their thoughts, directed them to seek, not the bread which perisheth, but that which endureth to eternal life; not meat for their bodies, but for their souls. He also declares himself to be that meat; that he came down from heaven; that he would give his flesh for the life of the world; and that except a man should eat his flesh, and drink his blood, he could have no life in him; but that whoever should partake of him should never die, but have eternal life.

These high and mysterious declarations confounded and offended them. They murmured when he said he came down from heaven, for they knew Joseph, his reputed father; and having no spiritual ideas of his discourse, they cried, "How can he give us his flesh to eat?" In short,

they thought these "hard sayings," not to be understood or believed.

Our Lord still maintained the doctrine of his descent from heaven, and intimated, that, ere long, they would see him ascend thither. He told them, that *eating his flesh* was not to be taken in the gross sense of the words, but was to be understood spiritually. He also showed them that their cavils and murmurs arose from the ignorance, corruption, and unbelief of their hearts; and that they needed divine teaching to make them wise to salvation, and that no man could or would come to him, and believe upon him, without superior assistance. "No man can come unto me, except the Father, who sent me, draw him."

These were the sublime and mysterious, but great and glorious truths, which so offended the Jews, and occasioned such a falling off among the disciples.

And is it not just the same to this day? Do we not still find that these doctrines give offence? The claim of Christ to a divine origin is opposed by some. The doctrine of his atonement is rejected by others. And the humbling doctrines of the necessity of divine influences, and of the sovereignty of God in bestowing them where he pleases, are held in abhorrence by many. Talk to men of morality, virtue, and good works, and they will hear you: but speak of grace, of the blood of Christ, of faith in his blood, of being taught of God, and drawn by the Spirit, and then they cry Enthusiasm! Fanaticism! &c. But let us not be offended at this. It should confirm us in the belief of the truth. And while many go back and follow Christ no more, let us consider him as putting the solemn question to us, "Will ye also go away?"

The question is the language of *affection*. It speaks the kindness of his loving heart. Our gracious Lord has a real concern for his servants, for his friends, for his brethren; and he is not willing to part with them. But he would have them serve him freely, and without constraint. He keeps no slaves. This question was put to try them, to give them an occasion of reflecting upon their own happiness, and upon the misery of those who had just forsaken him. And it operated accordingly. It gave occasion for the excellent answer of Peter, which we now proceed to consider.

2. *Then Simon Peter answered him, LORD, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.*

In this answer we see the character of the man who made it. Peter was bold and forward, but sincere, affectionate, and candid. He speaks in the name of all his brethren, taking it for granted they were all of the same mind; though, alas! there was a Judas, a devil, among them; one who had "no part nor lot in this matter."—Peter answers the question of our Lord by another question, *To whom shall we go?* We seek eternal life, and where can we find it but in thee? It is as if he had said, Whose disciples shall we be, if we cease to be thine?—Shall we go to the heathen philosophers for instruction? They are become vain in their imaginations; professing themselves to be wise, they are fools in the matter of eternal life. Shall we go to the Scribes and Pharisees? They are blind leaders of the blind. Shall we go to Moses? He will send us back to thee. Therefore we will stay where we are; we shall never do better.

It is observable, that in Peter's answer, *eternal life* appears to be the grand object of the disciples; and the reason why they would not forsake Christ is, because he has the *words* of eternal life. He teaches the true *doctrine* of eternal life, and he is able and willing to *give* us eternal life, as his discourse has largely shown. Let it then be remembered, that

Serious thoughts of eternity, and sincere desires for eternal life, have a powerful tendency to prevent apostasy.

Serious thoughts of eternity! Alas! how few possess them! In how few do they abide and operate! How few live under the daily impression of the *shortness of time*, and the *length of eternity*! Which is as much as to say, How few are believers! For it is the office of faith to look forward to things "not seen," and to be influenced by them as if they were present. And, indeed, this forms the grand distinction between the children of God and the children of this world. He that is of the earth is earthy; he thinks and speaks of earthly things; he that is born of heaven, is heavenly-minded. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." And it highly concerns each of us to know which of these is our character. It must be one. There is no middle state. And according to our state here, such will be our state hereafter. If eternal life be not our pursuit, it will never be our portion.

Those who are duly affected with eternal things will certainly be desirous of instruction. They will seriously inquire how eternal life may be obtained. "What

shall we do to be saved?" is the substance of their inquiry. Even the people who forsook Christ asked a question of this kind, ver. 28. "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" Our Lord gave them this plain answer. "This is the work of God, that ye believe in me." As elsewhere also he declares, "He that believeth on me shall not perish, but have everlasting life."

Every thing that relates to eternal life depends on Jesus. *He has the words of eternal life.* He discovered it more fully, and revealed it more plainly, than any of the prophets. His Gospel gives us a clear account of the blessed life and immortal glory of soul and body in the heavenly world. It shows us the true and spiritual nature of that state, and what will be the business and blessedness of glorified saints. It leaves us to no uncertain conjectures, poetical fancies, or sensual notions of paradise; but clearly describes it as a state of knowledge, purity and bliss, in the presence of Immanuel, God with us.

The true and only *way* to eternal life is revealed by Christ. Many ways have been devised by men. A thousand superstitions have been invented by crafty or deluded men, imposed upon the world, as means of obtaining eternal felicity. Every country and every imposture has produced something with this view: and carnal men still ludicrously and profanely talk of every one's setting up his own ladder to heaven. But away with all these.—Christ has the words of eternal life. "Whither I go," said he to his disciples, "ye know, and the way ye know." John. xiv. 4. Thomas, mistaking his meaning, said—"Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" This mistake gave occasion for a charming declaration on our Lord's part. "Jesus saith unto him—"I am the *way*—the *truth*—and the *life*: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." No words before were ever so plain. The substance of this great truth was indeed taught by sacrifices. These preached the necessity of a Mediator, and showed, that without shedding of blood there could be no remission of sins; but it remained for him who is the *Truth*, the substance of the Old Testament types, himself to say, *I am the way*. Christ, by his death, opened the gates of heaven. The cross of Christ is the only key that opens the door of glory. "We have boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus." This alludes to the High Priest of the Jews, who, once a year, went into the holy of holies with the blood of an animal. The

way into this was by the veil which separated it from the holy place. Our way to heaven is through the veil of Christ's body, crucified for us. And it is remarkable, that at the time of his death, the veil of the temple was rent in two, without hands, from the top to the bottom; which signified, that every obstruction to our entrance into heaven was removed by the death of Jesus; so that we may now draw near to God, and enter into glory, in full assurance of faith.

The words of Christ are "the words of eternal life" on another account. They are the *means* and *instrument* of that new and spiritual life in the soul, whereby it is prepared for eternal life. *The words that I speak unto you*, said, our Lord, verse 63 of this chapter, *they are spirit and they are life*—they are to be taken, not in a carnal, but in a spiritual sense; and they are the means of conveying the Holy Spirit, whose influence is effectual, unto spiritual and eternal life. It is by the Gospel that "Christ speaketh from heaven;" and when the Gospel is accompanied with the power of the Spirit, "the dead hear the voice of the Son of God, and live." For this purpose it was that the apostles, though forbidden of men, were commanded of Christ to "go, stand and speak in the temple to the people *all the words of this life*." By the same words the children of God are directed, established, encouraged, and nourished into eternal life.

In the view of advantages like these, well might Peter say, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" Eternal life is our aim. Thy words reveal it. Thou showest us the way to it. Thou art thyself the way. Thy word is the seed of life in our souls. Yea, thou art eternal life. To whom then can we go? We cannot, we dare not, we will not, forsake thee.

Such, my brethren, are the sentiments of every gracious soul. With such views as these we shall "cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart," and abhor the thoughts of apostasy from him.

APPLICATION.

HAVE we *come* to Christ? Are *we*, in any sense, his followers? If not, as we have already said, we cannot forsake him: but our case is no less dangerous. Woe be to those who, in a Christian land, a land of bibles and sermons, "refuse to hear him that speaketh from heaven." Woe be to us, if he should say to us, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." O, consider of it, thoughtless souls. If you would have eternal life, and surely you

wish for it, remember you must have *the words* of eternal life. You must learn the way of life. You must be interested in Jesus, who is the life. The Lord incline you, while it is called to-day, to hear his voice and live.

What we have heard of the words of life should endear them to us. The doctrines of grace are not idle speculations, or needless disputings about words and names; they are not a vain thing; they are words of life. O then "let the word of Christ dwell in us richly," let us lay it up in our hearts, and prize it above our chief treasure.

And now let us consider Christ himself as putting this question to each one of us—*Will thou go away?* Others do. We live in a day when great numbers do. Like the apostate Jews referred to in our text, their carnal minds, filled with reasoning pride, reject the Gospel, revile the Scriptures, deny Christ, and renounce the very name of Christian. The Lord pity them, and bring them back again to his fold! But wilt *thou* also go away? O consider well before you go. *To whom* will you go? Will you go to the modern philosophers? Not for eternal life, surely! They say there is no such thing; and if you do want eternal life, where will you find it but in Jesus?—Will you go back into the world? Alas, it is vain, and will deceive you. Will you return to sin and folly? It will insure your eternal death. Resolve then with Peter to cleave to Christ.

But pray for preserving grace. Be sensible of your own weakness, and pray, "Lord, leave me not to my own will. To be willing to go away and leave thee, is to be willing to perish; and I shall infallibly be willing to do it, if thou leavest my will to itself." You must watch and pray continually. Resist the first motions to coldness, negligence, and apostasy. Guard against the seductions of the world, and the bewitching pleasures of sin. And may God fulfill his gracious promise—"I will put my fear in their heart, that they shall not depart from me."

"Lord! thou alone hast pow'r, I know,
To save a wretch like me;
To whom, or whither could I go,
If I should turn from thee?"

"No voice but thine can give me rest,
And bid my fears depart;
No love but thine can make me bless'd,
And satisfy my heart."

"What anguish has that question stirr'd
If I will also go?
Yet, Lord, relying on thy word,
I humbly answer, No!"

Newton.

PRAYER.—ETERNAL and ever blessed God, we thank thee that life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel. We bless thee that thou dost give to thy people eternal life, and that this life is in thy dear Son. Enable us to come to him, that we may be saved; and if by thy grace we have been enabled to come to Jesus, O let us never forsake the blessed Savior. Permit neither the smiles nor the frowns, nor the cares of the world, to seduce us from the way of truth and holiness. May the love of Christ constrain us to follow him fully, and to dread the thought of wandering from his fold. May the great and good Shepherd ever guide us and defend us, and provide for us. And when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, may we fear no evil, but may we know that he is with us, and find that his rod and his staff comfort us. Unworthy, indeed, are we of mercies, so great as these which we now implore, but we ask them in the all-prevailing name of Jesus, to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON XLIV.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

Luke ii. 15. Let us now go, even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass.

THE wise man observes, that "the eye is not satisfied with seeing." The truth of this observation is confirmed by the experience of all ages; only it admits of one exception. There is *one* object, and only one, which can satisfy the eye of the mind, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. We have a proof of this in good old Simeon, mentioned in the 29th and 30th verses of this chapter. He had long waited for Christ, "the consolation of Israel, and he lived to see the infant Savior brought into the temple; when, clasping the holy child in his feeble arms, "he blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." Some of the Turks, it is said, put out their eyes, as soon as they have seen Mahomet's tomb, because they would not defile them again by regarding any common object. Does superstition teach them so to admire the grave of a wicked impostor? O let us, as Christians, hasten to behold a sight of real glory; let us "turn away our eyes from beholding vanities;" let us fix them upon the adorable Jesus; let us say, with the admiring shepherds in our text, when just informed of the Savior's birth. "Let us now go, even to Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass."

It was to *shepherds*; poor, honest, industrious men, that the good news was first announced:—an encouraging circum-

stance for the poor of this world and an encouragement for such to be "diligent in business," for it was when the shepherds were watching their flocks by night, that these glad tidings were brought them. An angel delivered the message; and a multitude of angels joined in chorus—*Glory to God in the highest—and on earth peace—good will towards men.* Here humility and glory were joined in their extremes. He empties himself of his heavenly glory: he takes upon him human nature; his mother is a poor woman; a common inn is the place of his birth; he is born in a stable; he is laid in a manger. O deep humiliation of the Son of God, the Creator of the world! And yet, behold the glory! A new star directs the wise men of the east to the honored spot; and a multitude of ministering spirits hymn his birth. Never was the birth of an earthly prince so highly honored.

God gives us *information*, to put us upon *action*. When the shepherds were informed of what had happened, and where it happened, it put them upon action. Is the Savior born in the city of David? Let us go then, said they, and see him. The wise men made the same improvement of their information. They saw his star in a distant country, and they followed its direction till they came to Bethlehem.

Let us learn another piece of instruction from them: "Let us go *now*," said they. What at midnight! Cool Reason would have said, It is an unseasonable hour; and Covetousness would have said, What must become of our flocks? But these plain men, who had left their beds to attend their flocks, now leave their flocks, to inquire after their Savior. Let religion then be our *first* business; it is "the one thing needful." And what we do in it, let us do it quickly; the sooner the better, without a moment's delay.

We may learn another thing from their example: "Let us go," said they: they excited one another to this good work. Let the advantages of society be brought into religion. How many, especially in holiday seasons, will say to one another, "Let us go to such an amusement, such a public house, such a party of pleasure;" let us rather say, "Let us go up to the house of the Lord, and he will teach us of his ways." "Let us go to Bethlehem, and see Jesus."

The shepherds did as they proposed: "They came with *haste*, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger." They believed before they came; but now their faith is confirmed by sight.

They were gratified and edified by the view; and "they returned glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had *heard and seen*."

Let us, then, who are here present, imitate these happy and simple-hearted men. Let us go to *Bethlehem*: the name signifies *The house of bread*; there, in the contemplation of Jesus, may we find bread for our souls. To excite your serious attention to this divine object, let me inform you what you may expect to see—

DEITY DISPLAYED—

MAN REDEEMED—and

SATAN RUINED.

Let us go to Bethlehem, and see *Deity displayed*. The first promise that God made to guilty man was, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head." Jesus Christ, as to the flesh, is the seed of the woman; but he is also infinitely more. St. Paul says, "When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman," Gal. iv. 4. It was necessary to our redemption, that the Savior of men should be a *man*; for the same nature that sinned must bear the punishment of sin. But, had Christ been produced in the ordinary way of human generation, he must have been a partaker of a sinful nature: this was prevented by the miraculous way of his conception, by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus, that *holy thing* which was born of the blessed Virgin, was to be called *the Son of God*, "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;" fit to become "sin for us, because he knew no sin."

In what manner the *human* nature was united to the divine, we cannot tell. It is enough for us, that it was so united. The testimony of Scripture is most abundant and satisfactory on this head. Let the following texts suffice. *His name shall be called IMMANUEL, which signifies GOD WITH US*, Matt. i. 23. *In the beginning was the WORD; and the WORD was with GOD, and the WORD was GOD: And the WORD was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us*, John i. 1. and 14. St. Paul assures us, 1 Tim. iii. 15, 16, that this is *the pillar and ground of the truth; and, without controversy, the great mystery of godliness—namely, that God was manifest in the flesh*.

O glorious and pleasing truth, God is manifest in the flesh! Surely it is highly desirable for feeling mortals to know their Maker; and, because we could not ascend to him, lo, he descends to us! Deplorable darkness had long covered the earth, and the wisest of men bowed down "to an un-

known God;" but, glory be to his name, "the only begotten Son, who was in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," John i. 18. This is he who is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person"—"the image of the invisible God." Heb. i. 3. This is he, "who, being in the form of God, and who thought it no robbery to be equal with God," condescends to become a man, a poor man, a servant; that we, through his poverty, might become eternally rich. By his heavenly doctrine; by his astonishing miracles; in his lovely disposition, and especially in his divine person, God was manifested to man. *Show us the Father* (said one of his disciples to him) *and it sufficeth us*: Philip wanted some *visible* representation of God, such as was sometimes granted to the prophets. Jesus, in a way of gentle rebuke, replied—*Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?* and then added these remarkable words, fully proving that God was manifested in the flesh—*He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father*, John xiv. 8, 9. "Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?—henceforth ye have known him and seen him," ver. 7. 10. "I and my Father are one." Jesus Christ, then, is God manifested in the flesh. Let us go to Bethlehem, and see this great sight: Angels desire to look at it. Glorious mystery! We cannot fully comprehend it. "Men may speak and write of it; but it is not so proper to describe it, as to say that it cannot be described. We may speak of it; but the most we can say about it is, that it is unspeakable: and the most we know is, that it passeth knowledge!" Suffice it that we believe and adore. Let but "the light shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ," and it is enough: we will dwell at Bethlehem all our days, until he shall remove us to Bethel above, where we hope no longer to see "through a glass darkly, but face to face."

II. Let us go to Bethlehem, and behold *Man redeemed*!

The redemption of fallen, guilty, helpless man, was the grand design of the Savior's birth. *God sent his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to REDEEM them that were under the law*. He was named Jesus, because he came to "save his people from their sins." There is something delightful in the name *Savior*. Cicero, the Roman orator, said, that when travelling in Greece, he saw a pillar inscribed with this word—*SAVIOR*. He ad-

mired the fullness of the name, but he knew not its Christian meaning. How much more may the redeemed sinner admire it!—

"'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
"Tis life, and health, and peace."

It was in this character that the saints of old long expected his appearance. "To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name, whosoever believeth in him should receive remission of sins." About the time of his coming, the godly people in Jerusalem were "looking for redemption," and with Simeon "waiting for the consolation of Israel." Our Lord himself declares this to be the chief design of his coming.—"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not *perish*, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. Observe, it was to save sinners from *perishing*; for perish we must without an interest in him. Do we know this? Why do we call him a *Savior*, if we see not our need of deliverance? and from what!—from *sin* and from *hell*. If we are not saved from sin here, we shall not be saved from hell hereafter.

"God sent his Son in the likeness of *sinful flesh*, and (by making him a sacrifice) for *sin*, condemned *sin in the flesh*," Rom. viii. 3. Mark how the Son of God appeared—"in the likeness of sinful flesh;" his nature was perfectly pure; but it had the likeness of ours, which is wholly corrupt. "He knew no sin:" none in nature, none in practice. He had a "clean heart and pure hands." He could challenge his bitterest enemies to convince him of sin; yea, he defied Satan himself, the great accuser—"The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." Thus he was a pure and spotless lamb, fit to become a sacrifice for sin. Under the law, every victim must be perfect, and without blemish. It was necessary the Lamb of God should be so; for "he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin." 1 John iii. 5.

Being thus pure and holy, the sins of the whole Church were laid upon him. "He was made sin for us;" "he suffered for our sins;" the Lord laid upon him our iniquities;" "he bore our sins in his own body, on the tree." And thus God *condemned sin in the flesh*; he condemned our sin in the flesh of Christ: he showed his extreme hatred of it; he passed sentence of death upon it; and executed that sentence in the dreadful death of our Lord. And thus, the condemning of sin in Christ, our surety, prevents the con-

demning of it in our persons. And this is the ground of that excellent privilege mentioned, Rom. viii. 1. "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." But this is not all: the end and design of this is, *that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*. Thus the perfect righteousness demanded by the moral law is fulfilled in us; not in us *personally*, but by our surety in *our nature*, and in *our stead*; and so might be deemed, in legal estimation, to be fulfilled *for* and *by* all those of us who truly believe, and who prove the sincerity of our faith by a holy walk.

O the grace and love of the blessed Jesus! he, the most high God, Blessed for evermore, consented to become man. He, who was *life*, and gave life to all, became a mortal man. He was *born to die*. *Because we were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same*. O love, beyond example or degree!

"O for this love let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break;
And all harmonious human tongues
The Savior's praises speak."

Thus Jesus "delivered us from the wrath to come."—Our sin deserved *wrath*, the wrath that is to *come*: for God bears with sinners now, and "endures, with much long-suffering, the vessels of wrath which are fit for destruction." But God is reconciled to every believer in Jesus. "He was angry, but his anger is turned away." Those who believe, "have passed from death unto life;" those who are redeemed from the curse of the law receive the adoption of sons." They are also redeemed from the power and dominion of sin; it shall not reign in their mortal bodies. They are redeemed to God; body, soul, spirit, substance, talents, all they have, and all they are, belong to the Lord: and when they have served him and their generation, during his appointed time, he will take them to himself, and they shall know the full meaning of that comprehensive phrase—*eternal life*. Such are the inestimable blessings which Jesus, the Redeemer of man, came to procure. But let us take another turn to Bethlehem, and see

III. *Satan ruined.*

It was Satan, the head of fallen spirits, who, assuming the form of a cunning serpent, seduced our first mother in the garden; and employing her as the tempter of Adam, seduced our first father also.

Thus were the flood-gates of sin opened in our world. Thus Satan usurped a sovereign authority over the souls of men: in so much that in sacred writ, he is distinguished by the names of "the prince of this world;" yea, "the god of this world."—He has set up an opposite throne to that of God; he rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience, who are led captive by him at his will. Millions of souls have readily submitted to his chains, and have lived and died in love with their bondage. Cruel tyrant! who shall deliver us from thy destructive power?

It was when our fallen parents stood trembling before their Judge, expecting every moment to taste the threatened death: it was then that a dawn of mercy glimmered in the first Gospel promise, Gen. iii. 14, 15. The Lord turning to the serpent who seduced them, utters this curse—"Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go; and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life; and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. No doubt, the devil is here condemned, under the name of the serpent, because he had abused that creature in order to deceive man. He is cursed; for "everlasting fire is prepared for him and his angels." His power was to be contracted; he was to creep, not fly: his power should be restrained to the *dust*, that is to *earthly-minded men*, or to the *bodies* of the saints. His *head* was to be bruised; that is, his power was to be finally destroyed by Jesus Christ; for so St. John expounds it—"The Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil." The serpent's poison, craft, and life, are in his head; if this be bruised, he is destroyed. Jesus Christ, in his temptation, baffled the tempter in all his cunning assaults. He cast out devils from the bodies of men; he enabled his disciples to do the same, and empowered them "to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy;" and he has promised also to his people that "he will bruise Satan under their feet shortly."

God also declared there should be "constant enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman," which includes the *santification* of all the elect. Unconverted men are in peace with the devil; but, when grace comes, war commences, and God will make the believer more than a conqueror.

But all this is in consequence of the birth of Jesus. He is most eminently "the seed of the woman," "the Son of God made of a woman." By the merit of his death, and by the grace of his Spirit, he destroys the old serpent. Satan was, indeed, allowed "to bruise his *heel*;" and he did so, by his agents, when he prevailed to procure the crucifixion of our Lord; but it was then, even then, that "he bruised Satan's *head*," and laid the foundation of his everlasting destruction. Never before did fallen Spirits discover so much opposition to Christ. "They were aware, probably, of Christ's design to overturn their empire; therefore they mustered all their forces, employed all their skill; and, as all was at stake, made one strong effort in a kind of decisive engagement. They armed every proper instrument, and set every engine at work—temptations, persecutions, violence, slander, treachery, and the like.—Our Lord, whom they opposed, made no formidable appearance; he was despised of men, a worm and no man. But this made the event more glorious. It was a spectacle worth the admiration of the universe, to see the despised Galilean turn all the artillery of hell back upon itself: to see one in the likeness of men, wresting the keys of hell and death out of the hands of the devil; to see him entangle the powers of darkness in their own net, and making them ruin their own designs with their own stratagems. They made one disciple betray him, and another deny him; they made the Jews accuse him, and the Romans crucify him. But these were the very means of spoiling and triumphing over themselves, Col. ii. 15. The cruelty of devils and their instruments was made subservient to the designs of infinite mercy, and the sins of men overruled for "making an end of sin, and bringing in everlasting righteousness."*

Thus was the "prince of the world judged." Christ, by his death, "hath destroyed him that had the power of death," and rendered this evident, by the miracles that attended his Gospel, and the power of his grace in the experience of all believers. All the effects of Satan's usurpation shall finally be abolished. Christ shall reign universally through the earth. Satan shall be bound for a thousand years; and though loosed for a short season, shall be utterly cast out, and confined to hell. The grave shall resign all its dead, and Jehovah Jesus shall reign for ever—"The

* See Maclaurin's most admirable sermon on glorying in the Cross of Christ.

Lord God omnipotent." Glory, Glory, Glory be to him!

APPLICATION.

HAVING been to Bethlehem, to see this thing which is come to pass, let us now, like the shepherds, "return, glorifying God for all the things we have heard and seen." We have learned, that in the incarnation of the Son of God, we may see *Deity displayed—Man redeemed—and Satan ruined*. How vast and glorious are these designs of a Savior's birth! The angels knew this when they sang—"Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men." But are these purposes of his appearance answered as to us? Is God, in all his glorious perfections, manifested in the person of Jesus? Well, does this attract our notice, and engage our souls to adore, and love, and praise him, "magnifying the God of Israel?" "The Lord hath visited and redeemed his people." Are we among his redeemed? Are we actually redeemed from the guilt and power of our own sins, and from the follies and vanities of this world? The throne of Satan is shaken; but is his power in us abolished? Are we "delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son?"

This is the way in which we are to consider this grand event; and, if the ends of Christ's birth be answered *in our own experience*, we have abundant cause for joy. But then it will not be the vain, frothy, carnal joy of the world. The manner in which some pretend to celebrate the birth of Christ, at the season called Christmas, is a disgrace to a Christian nation. They contradict, as much as possible, the design of his coming. He came "to destroy the works of the devil;" they try to keep them up. What have cards, dancing, songs, gluttony, and drunkenness, to do with the birth of Jesus? He came to save his people *from their sins*, not *in them*. O let young people guard against the temptations of such a season; for there is more sin committed at Christmas in a few days, than in many weeks at other times; and the sin is the more aggravated, as it passes under the notion of religious joy. But it is an affront to a holy God, a reproach to the Christian name, and ruinous to the souls of men.

Let us rather go to Bethlehem. Let us, like Mary, "ponder these things in our hearts." No sooner did the shepherds hear of him, than they ran to inquire after him. Let us also say, "We would see Jesus."

And where shall we seek him but in his house, in his word; and if we seek him earnestly, we shall find that the church of God is still a *Bethlehem*, "a house of bread." God will feed our souls with "the bread which came down from heaven, and which endureth to eternal life."

We may also *see and serve him*, in his poor members.

"The poor we have always with us." As Christ was found in the stable, so we may find some of his in a cottage, in a garret, forsaken and destitute. Let us go and visit poor families, sick persons, fatherless children, in honor of him who was "wrapt in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger;" he will accept the kindness, and say, "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it unto me."

PRAYER.—Most gracious and merciful God, we bless thee that when the fullness of the time was come, thou didst send forth thy Son into our world to redeem us from the curse of the law. We adore him as the brightness of thy glory, and the express image of thy person. O thou who didst cause the light to shine out of darkness, shine into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of thy glory in the face of Jesus Christ. May we feel our need of the Savior; may we be enabled truly to believe on Jesus, to the saving of our souls. May we have satisfactory evidence that we have passed from death unto life, and that to us there is no more any condemnation. Deliver us, O Lord, from the power and malice of our great enemy, who goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Give us grace to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation. May we be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and through him may we be made more than conquerors, that Satan may be bruised under our feet. Grant this, O Lord, for the sake of thy dear Son, to whom be glory, and honor, and praise, both now and ever. Amen.

SERMON XLV.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST THE CHRISTIAN'S GLORY.

Gal. vi. 14. God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

THE Apostle Paul, whose words these are, had good reason for glorying in the cross of Christ. He tells us in the text, how useful it was to him. And whoever obtains the true knowledge of "Christ crucified," will, like him, "determine to know nothing else," and "esteem all things but loss for the excellency of it." It is well known, that the cross of Christ was

a stumbling-block to the Jews: nothing offended them so much as the plainness, the poverty, the sufferings, and death of Jesus: but St. Paul gloried in the cross; yea, he would glory in nothing else. The Jews gloried in their relation to Abraham, in their temple, in their religious ceremonies: but, he who knew that these were but "shadows of good things to come," gloried in the substance, gloried in the cross of Christ.

"The cross of Christ" signifies, either *our sufferings for him*, or *his sufferings for us*. In the former sense, we are to "take up the cross and follow him," but here we are to understand *his sufferings for us*; for these are what the apostle gloried in. "The cross of Christ" sometimes includes the whole Gospel, the doctrine of him who died on the cross, of which his meritorious death for sinners is the most principal part.

As the cross of Christ is of so much use to a Christian, let us, *first*, Take a view of it, or contemplate the sufferings of Christ upon it; and then, *secondly*, Consider its practical uses, or the reasons we have for glorying in it.

I. Let us contemplate the sufferings of our Lord.

But how, or where shall we begin? Let no one rush into this solemn work in a thoughtless manner. Few persons are properly prepared for it. A mind polluted with sensual pleasures, or a heart crowded with worldly cares, is ill qualified for the task. When Moses approached the burning bush, he was commanded to take off his shoes, for the place on which he stood was holy ground. *Gethsemane* and *Calvary* are also holy ground. Let us approach with godly fear, not with vain curiosity; and may the good Spirit of God, the glorifier of Jesus, take these sacred things, respecting his "agony and bloody sweat, his cross and passion," and so show them to us, as that we may repent, believe, and rejoice!

We ought to remember, that the whole life of Christ was a life of suffering. He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." For our sakes he became poor, and endured the contradiction of sinners against himself. But we must now confine our meditations to his last sufferings, *in the garden; during his trial; and at Golgotha*.

Our blessed Lord having "loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end;" and gave a most affecting proof of it, by washing their feet; celebrating the Passover with them; instituting the

sacred supper; and by his pathetic discourse and affectionate prayers. He then went forth out of the city, accompanied by all the apostles except Judas, who was preparing to betray him, to a garden where he used to retire, and had spent many nights in devotion. At the entrance of this, he left eight of the disciples, taking Peter, James, and John to a separate place, where they were spectators of his distress.

Then Jesus "began to be sorrowful, and very heavy,"—to be "sore amazed"—the words signify much more than they express; "they imply that he was possessed with fear, horror, and amazement; encompassed with grief, and overwhelmed with sorrow: pressed down with consternation and dejection of mind; tormented with anxiety, and disquietude of spirit."

How vast must that pressure have been, which obliged *him* to complain, and to complain to his inferiors—"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death!" He was in an "AGONY"—a word used nowhere else in the New Testament; an agony so great and astonishing, that—"his sweat was it were great drops of blood falling to the ground." In this extreme distress, he betook himself to prayer; he first kneeled down, and afterwards fell on his face upon the ground, saying, "O Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt."

What a mysterious scene is this! What could be the occasion of this agony? It was no human enemy that hurt him; nor was it the fear of his approaching death. Probably it was some peculiar conflict with the powers of darkness, for this was "their hour." Perhaps, the restraints usually laid on these malignant spirits was now removed; and who can tell what terrors they may inflict, if permitted? Probably, our Lord had now before his eyes the collected guilt of millions of sinners; and the intolerable misery due to their iniquities: and what an agony must this occasion, when an individual finds one "wounded spirit" more than he can bear!

Here stop, and see "the sinfulness of sin." Perhaps you have seen it only in the garden of pleasure, wearing the mask of happiness: here, in the garden of sorrow, behold sin stripped of its mask. See in the agony of Jesus, its true nature and proper effects. "The wages of sin is death;" therefore the soul of Christ was sorrowful, "even unto death." See here a specimen of that "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," which every soul

of man, not interested in Christ, must suffer, not for a few hours, but to all eternity. And here, believer, see what thou must have suffered, if Jesus had not suffered it for thee. But "it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief," that thou mayest be filled with joy unspeakable. He drank this bitter cup, that he might put into thy hand the sweet cup of salvation.

Our Lord, who knew beforehand all things which should befall him, intimated to his disciples the near approach of the traitor Judas. "Rise," said he, "let us be going; he is at hand that betrayeth me." This infamous man had sold his affectionate Master to the priests; and, knowing the place of his retirement, comes attended with an armed force: yet, still pretending friendship, salutes him with a kiss, which was the appointed signal for his apprehension. Jesus offers no resistance, nor attempts an escape. The Lamb of God freely offers himself up, and, with surprising intrepidity and composure, tells them who he is. He could have slain them all in a moment, for he no sooner uttered the words, *I am He*, than his enemies drew back, and "fell on the ground," as if they had been struck with lightning. He asks nothing for himself, but desires a passport to insure the safety of those slothful disciples, who had been too careless to watch with him one hour. He rebukes Peter for using his sword, and kindly heals the officer whom he had wounded. "Then all his disciples forsook him and fled."

Now let us follow our Lord from the garden, through the streets of Jerusalem, bound, and hurried along as if he had been a thief, from one part of the city to another; first to the house of Annas, and then to the place of Caiaphas, where, though it was night, the principal part of the Sanhedrim were met to receive their prisoner.

And here, what horrid injustice reigned. So innocent was he, that his enemies were forced to contrive to forge the shadow of a charge against him. They could scarcely find any villains hardy enough to come forward and accuse him. At length two witnesses arose, pretending that three years before, he had talked about destroying the temple, and rebuilding it in three days. This foolish charge, founded on a gross perversion of his words, was deemed sufficient ground of accusation. And accordingly, early in the morning, he was brought before the great council, and put upon his defence. But he thought proper to decline any vindication of himself before the bloody men, who were determined

to murder him. Thus "he was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth. He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth."

Being adjured, by the High-Priest, to declare whether he was the Messiah, the Son of the blessed God, he affirmed it fully. These wretched hypocrites, taking the advantage of his confession, and pretending great concern for the honor of God, charged him with blasphemy, and immediately adjudged him to death.

But as the power of life and death was, in a great measure, taken from them by the Romans, instead of putting him to death by stoning, they took him to Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor, who, at their request, proceeded to his trial. Here, with malignant cunning, they charge him, not with blasphemy, but with *sedition*, refusing to pay tribute to Cæsar, and calling himself a king, in opposition to the emperor. Our Lord was still silent; at which Pilate was astonished. Pilate having examined him privately, was satisfied of his innocence, and wished to discharge him. But the Jews increased in their vehemence against him, insisting upon it that he should be put to death. To which, at length, Pilate, an unjust, time-serving man, reluctantly consented.

Shocking were the insults which he endured at various times and places, from the officers of the priests, and from the soldiers. He was mocked, buffeted, spit upon, blindfolded, crowned with thorns, and most severely scourged. But thus was the Scripture fulfilled: for it is remarkable, that every particular part of his sufferings was predicted long before by the prophets; and thus, under the influence of their own wicked passions, they, unwittingly, accomplished the divine decrees, "for to do whatsoever his hand and his counsel determined before to be done." Acts iv. 27.

And now, they speedily proceed to the execution of the unjust and bloody sentence. And he, bearing his cross, went forth to a place called Golgotha, or the place of a skull, for there the bodies of many criminals were buried. O, how different a procession was this from one which had passed the streets a few days before! Then the multitude welcomed him unto the city, shouting Hosannah! now, they hasten his death as a malefactor, crying, "Away with him, crucify him." So little is popular applause to be regarded. A few, indeed, sympathize with our suffering Lord; but he, affected more with their

future woe, than with his own present sufferings, says, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."

Fatigued, and ready to faint with pain, loss of blood, and the weight of the cross, which he carried upon his bleeding shoulders, Cymon, a stranger, is compelled to bear it for him. At length they arrive at the place. It was "without the city:" in answer to the types of old, which required that the sin-offering should be made without the camp; and, as an example to us, that we should be willing to follow him "without the camp, bearing his reproach." The cross being laid upon the ground, the sacred body of our Lord, now stripped of all his garments, is laid upon it, stretched as upon a rack, and fastened to it with large spike nails, cruelly driven through his hands and his feet. The cross was then drawn upright, its foot being placed in a hole dug for the purpose. There our Lord hangs, the whole weight of his blessed body bearing upon the wounded parts of it. Not content with the corporeal pains he endured, the cruel people endeavor to aggravate them by bitter taunts and reproaches. They amused themselves with his misery. They ridiculed his pretending to be the Son of God, and the king of Israel; his rebuilding the temple; they bid him "come down from the cross," and then they would believe on him; they tell him "to save himself," if he could save others.—And in all this, the chief priests and scribes, forgetting their dignity, joined the unthinking rabble.

Thus "it behoved Christ to suffer," and thus "the Scriptures were fulfilled." Thus was he "*lifted up*," like his type, the brazen serpent in the wilderness. He was "cut off, but not for himself," as Daniel predicted. "They pierced his hands and his feet," as said the Psalmist.—He was "mocked, scourged, and crucified," as himself had before declared. "They cast lots for his garments," and "he was numbered with the transgressors."

In this painful situation, our Lord continued for several hours; for it was a slow, lingering, and extremely painful kind of death. It was also *shameful* in the highest degree; a gallows and a gibbet are not names of greater infamy among us, than that of the cross then was. It was also deemed *an accursed death*. By the law of Moses, a person hanged upon a tree was deemed *accursed of God*. Alluding to this, St. Paul says, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Gal. iii. 13.

Our Lord, who, when at large, went

about doing good, continued to manifest his benevolence, even upon the cross. He prays for his unfeeling murderers: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." To the penitent thief he said, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." He committed the care of his mother to John, his beloved disciple. All this was done while he suffered the most shocking pains. But the agony of his mind, it should seem, far exceeded them. He was suffering the wrath of God due to sin. The horrible darkness, that for three hours covered the land, was an emblem of the more dreadful darkness and terror of soul, which he endured; and which extorted that mysterious cry—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

But the painful scene draws to a close. All the prophecies were fulfilled. All the Father gave him to do was accomplished. His sufferings therefore must terminate. Exulting, then, in the completion of his vast and glorious work, he cried, *It is finished*. And then, that with his dying breath, he might teach *us* how to die, he said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit;" and having said thus, "bowing his head, he gave up the ghost," or "*dismissed his Spirit*."

Thus have we taken a brief view of the cross of Christ. We have seen the blessed Redeemer taken and bound as a thief; hurried from place to place through the night; unjustly condemned both in the ecclesiastical and civil court; treated with all the indignity and insult that hellish malice could devise; buffeted, scourged, and spit upon; and at length put to death on the cross. In all this, the carnal eye beholds nothing but weakness, pain, and ignominy; but the enlightened eye of faith sees a beauty, a grandeur, a glory, far surpassing the brightest objects of sense. So far from blushing at the meanness or shame of the cross, the true believer will cordially unite with St. Paul, and say—*God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Let us then proceed to consider

II. The reasons we have for glorying in the cross.

Many reasons may be offered, but we have room to mention only three. By the cross of Christ, The perfections of God are displayed;—the believing sinner is fully justified;—and provision is made for his sanctification.

We glory in the cross of Christ, because God is glorified in it. The *goodness, mercy, and love* of God appear in all his gifts to men; but most of all in this un-

speakable gift. Of no other gift it is said—"God so loved the world as to bestow it." "Herein is love;" a love so great, that it includes and insures every other good, "for he that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all, will assuredly deny us nothing good." And O, "the manifold wisdom" that beams from the cross. How deep the contrivance, to make "mercy and truth meet together, righteousness and peace embrace each other. Never did the spotless holiness and the inflexible justice of God appear with such awful splendor as at Calvary. Not all the sufferings of the damned can put such honor on the holy law, as it received from the sufferings of Jesus upon the cross: those sufferings "magnified the law and made it honorable." Thus God "declared his justice in the remission of sins," so that the law as well as the sinner may justly glory in the cross of Christ; for both receive eternal honor from it.

Again, That which endears the cross of Christ to believers is, that from thence they derive free and full justification; they are "justified freely, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. How glorious is that declaration—"The Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all!" That heavy burden, enough to crush a world, was borne by him; and blessed be God, borne away by him; so borne away, that, if sought for, it shall not be found. We behold then in a crucified Savior, "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The real Christian will glory in nothing else. He places no dependence on his prayers, his repentance, his duties, his charity, his sufferings; all these are for ever discarded, in respect of justification by them. To trust upon these, in whole or in part, would be the greatest dishonor to Christ, and render his cross a needless, useless thing. This he abhors from his heart, as the vilest blasphemy and sacrilege; and therefore sincerely says with the apostle, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

But there is another reason for glorying in the cross, namely, it is the cause and the instrument of our *sanctification*;—hereby the world is crucified unto us, and we are crucified to the world. Nothing but a spiritual sight of the glory of the cross, and a good hope of personal interest in its blessings, will ever effectually wean our hearts from the world. To be dead to the world, is of the utmost importance in the matter of our sanctification; for the love of the world is the principal

source of our sins.—We shall never cease to make the world our portion, till we get something better in its stead. It is by the doctrine of Christ we learn its vanity. It is by the example of Christ we learn to despise it. His whole humiliation, from the manger to the cross, poured contempt on human greatness, and has sanctified to his followers a life of labor, poverty, and reproach. A true follower of Christ will be ashamed to glory in those worldly objects, which his Savior trampled beneath his feet, while it will sweetly reconcile him to an humble lot, that his master endured the same; and thus will he learn "to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Jesus."

APPLICATION.

When the people who came together to see the doleful spectacle of the crucifixion, beheld the things that were done, they smote their breasts and returned. And surely, when we return from this view of the cross, and consider what we have seen and heard, we have reason to smite our breasts, and be deeply affected with our sins and his sufferings. Nature itself seemed to sympathize with our suffering Lord. The sun was darkened. The earth quaked. The rocks were torn asunder. The veil of the temple was rent. The graves were opened; and the heathen guards were constrained to say, "Truly this was the Son of God!" And now, how are our hearts affected? Is all this "nothing to us?" Can we behold this awful scene with cold indifference? If we can, it may be feared our hearts are harder than the rocks, and that we have no part nor lot in the matter. Surely this awful spectacle will command our attention, and excite our serious thoughts. Come, you who have loved and lived in sin, who have rolled it as a sweet morsel under your tongues, who have laughed at, and often said, What harm is there in it? Come, and see the Savior in his agony, sweating blood: see him buffeted and despised; see him bleeding, groaning and dying on the cross. And what was all this for? It was for sin. It was to make atonement for sin. He died, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." It was to save such sinners as you from eternal sufferings. Such was his love. O sinner, let this love constrain thee to forsake thy sins, and come to him, that thou mayest have life.

When I am lifted up, said Jesus before his crucifixion, *I will draw all men to me.* O what blessed attraction is there in the cross of Christ! Here is salvation. A sal-

vation complete and free: just such as a guilty helpless sinner needs. When Christ crucified was first preached by Peter, three thousand souls, and among them perhaps many of his murderers, were drawn to him in one day.—To-day, by this sermon, he is lifted up; “crucified before your eyes.” O for the power of the Holy Spirit, to draw your hearts to him! Come, and he will receive you. Come, and he will pardon you. Come, and he will give you rest. His arms, once extended on the cross, are still open to receive the chief of sinners. His blood still cleanseth from all sin;

“Each purple drop proclaims there’s room,
“And bids the poor and needy come.”

And now, O that every professed disciple of Christ would consider the latter part of the text, and ask himself this question: “Is the world crucified to me, and I to the world?” Does the cross of my Savior throw a salutary shade over the gaudy glories of the world. Is it crucified? Is it a dead, or at least, a dying thing in my esteem; and am I, because of my attachment to the truth, cause, and people of Christ, become like a dead man in the world’s esteem? Such, brethren, in some happy degree, is the true influence of the cross of Christ. Such is the holy, practical tendency of Gospel truth; and whoever finds this in himself, has abundant cause to glory in the cross of Christ.

May divine grace teach us, more and more, to esteem the cross of Christ, and to glory in nothing but our knowledge of it, interest in it, expectations from it, and its practical influence on our hearts. Then may we hope, ere long, to see “the Lamb that was slain, seated in the midst of the throne;” and with our feeble voices, to make some little addition to the grand chorus of the redeemed singing, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and who hath redeemed us to God by his blood.”

PRAYER.—O Thou God of love, adored be thy name that thou hast so loved the world as to give thy dear Son to suffer and to die for sinners. We bless thee that he gave his life a ransom for many. We bless thee that he died, the just for the unjust; and that through him thou canst be just, and the sinner justified that believeth on his name. May our hearts be deeply affected by the consideration of the Savior’s sufferings and death. Through his atoning death may we obtain life eternal. By his stripes may we be healed. May we be justified freely by thy grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. We desire to glory in a Savior’s cross, and in that alone. May we feel the power of its attraction. By his cross may the world be crucified to the world. No longer may we be ensnared by its vanities, or alarmed by its threatenings. Hence-

forth may we live to the glory of him who loved us, and who gave himself for us. May we esteem it our highest honor to suffer shame for his name. May we never be ashamed of him, but boldly confess him before men; and may he graciously acknowledge us when he comes in his glory to judge the world. And unto the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit be the glory and honor, world without end. Amen.

SERMON XLVI.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

Luke xxiv. 34. The Lord is risen indeed.

NEVER was there a day of greater gladness than that on which our Lord arose; never was there greater cause for joy: for were not Christ seen, our faith and hope would be in vain, and we should yet be in our sins.

When Jesus Christ was laid in the grave, great was the triumph of his enemies; great the dejection of his friends. The sorrowful disciples had fondly hoped, “it had been He who should have redeemed Israel;” but now their hopes are buried in his grave. How great then must have been their surprise, and their joy, when Jesus actually arose, and appeared to several of them! Our text is an exclamation, expressive of these passions: it was made by the ten apostles to the two brethren, who had seen Christ at Emmaus, and who had just returned from thence to relate the joyful news. Before they could well speak, the apostles salute them with this pleasing sentence—“The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.” The two disciples, in their return, communicate what they had seen and heard, and how “Jesus was known to them in breaking of bread.” Blessed and heavenly news! well might they all be eager to tell it. The primitive Christians, it is said, used to salute each other on the Lord’s day morning with these words, *The Lord is risen!* And it is a pleasing custom, still continued in London, that the boys belonging to Christ’s Hospital appear in Easter week, each with a printed label affixed to his coat, having the same inscription, “The Lord is risen.” Happy, if those poor children, or the multitude beholding them walk in procession to church, knew the sacred import of that charming sentence. It will be happy for us, if now we are taught “the power of his resurrection; and so contemplate these precious words, “that our faith and hope may be in God.”

We may place the words of our text in three points of view, and consider them as

the language of—WONDER—CERTAINTY—and JOY.

I. Let us consider the words as expressive of their *Wonder*.

And yet, we wonder it should appear so wonderful to them. Had not our Lord often told them he should rise from the dead? Had not he said, "Destroy this temple," meaning his body, "and in three days I will raise it up?" Had not he said, "There shall no other sign be given to this generation than the sign of the prophet Jonas: for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth?" Could the disciples forget these sayings? The Jews certainly remembered them, and, therefore, sealed and guarded the sepulchre. There were many intimations of the resurrection in the writings of the prophets. It was evident from the Scriptures, that "thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." Indeed, our Lord rested the whole weight of his mission on this event; to this he referred the whole credibility of all he asserted. It was, therefore, of infinite consequence to the disciples, that their Master should revive and forsake the tomb.

But who can describe the state of their minds, when they saw the Lord in the hands of his foes; bound, tried, condemned, executed, and laid in the prison of the grave? There was much ignorance and unbelief remaining in them. They had not wholly got rid of their foolish notion of a temporal kingdom; but their hopes of this kind were now completely baffled. They might also have many distressing apprehensions about their own personal safety. In short, they were perplexed and distressed beyond measure, and they had either forgotten what Christ had said of rising again, or did not clearly understand it, or desponded as to the event.

Great, therefore, was their surprise and astonishment, when first informed of his resurrection. Mary Magdalene and some other pious women, were the first witnesses of the fact; they ran to inform Peter and John, who immediately hastened to the spot; they found the tomb open, and the grave-clothes left in it, but saw not Jesus. But Peter afterwards saw him. He made himself known to the two disciples at Emmaus on the same day. The news quickly spread among all, and though they were "slow of heart to believe," they were constrained to admit the fact; but they were overpowered with surprise and astonishment, and this they expressed in the text, "The Lord is risen indeed!" But

II. These words imply the **CERTAINTY** of this important fact, "The Lord is risen, *indeed*,"—strange as it is, it is true; it is absolutely certain; we are perfectly satisfied of it. And this certainty was immediately afterwards abundantly confirmed; for, while they were yet speaking, he appeared in the midst of them; and, to convince them he was not a mere spirit, not only showed them his wounded hands and feet, but also ate and drank with them.

The certainty of this event is of the utmost consequence. This great pillar bears all the weight of the Christian system; and could the Samson of infidelity remove it, the whole fabric must fall to the ground. But, blessed be God, we have no fears on this head. We know that "we have not followed cunningly devised fables," but that this grand truth comes to us confirmed by many infallible proofs, on which our faith securely rests, Acts i. 3. Let us examine some of these:

1. *The very fear of imposition* tended to this certainty. The chief priests, having heard that Christ declared he should rise again, applied to Pilate, saying, "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command, therefore, that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: So the last error shall be worse than the first." Matt. xxvii. 62. Pilate complied with their wishes. The huge stone that secured the entrance of the sepulchre was sealed with the public seal, which none might break upon pain of death; and a strong guard of soldiers was placed to defend the whole. But how vain is it for man to fight with God! The stone, the seal, the guard, can never keep the Lord of life a prisoner of death; but they all tended exceedingly to confirm the truth of his resurrection. Had these malicious precautions been omitted, we had lost one of the strongest proofs of the event.

The ignorance or the forgetfulness of the disciples respecting his rising again; their cowardice at the time, rendering them totally unfit to venture to steal the body, had they been so disposed; and their incredulity, when first told that he was risen, all unite in strengthening the evidence; but especially the unbelief of Thomas, who for a whole week persisted in refusing to believe any evidence but that of his own senses, which at length was granted.

2. *The number of witnesses* to the fact strongly confirms it. Mary Magdalene was the first. Much was forgiven her, and

she loved much; her love was rewarded with this honor. She first saw Jesus, and mistook him for the gardener; but she knew her shepherd's voice, and owned her Lord, by whose direction she runs to tell the apostles. Next he appeared to the other Mary, and Salome, when they were flying from the empty tomb, terrified at the sight of the angel. — *Jesus met them, saying, All hail!* they held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Peter was then favored with a sight of his risen Lord. Marvellous kindness to the man who had deserted and denied him! Let it stand as a proof of Christ's regard to penitent backsliders. In the afternoon, on the same day, he joined company with two disciples, walking to a village seven miles from Jerusalem. They knew him not at first: but he talked to them—so sweetly opened the Scriptures, and showed the necessity of the resurrection, that their hearts glowed with holy fire. He condescended also to sup with them. It was then, while "he brake the bread and blessed it," in a manner peculiar to himself, that they recollected his person. Fired with love, and filled with joy, they swiftly retrace the seven miles back to the city; and, eager to publish the glad event, they hasten to the chamber of the apostles, where they relate "what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread."

Immediately "Jesus appears in the midst;" mild majesty beaming in his placid countenance, and heavenly consolation flowing from his lips, *Peace be unto you.* When they discovered fear, he added, *Why are you troubled? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.* And when he had spoken thus, he showed them his hands and his feet; there they saw the certain marks of his sufferings, and his identity was fully proved. Nor did he immediately vanish; he continued with them a considerable time. He showed them from the Scriptures, the necessity of his resurrection; upbraided them with their unbelief; and, to put the matter out of all doubt, he offered to eat with them, and did actually eat a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honey-comb. Luke xxiv. 42.

During forty days that followed this event, he met them frequently in different places, instructing them at large "in things pertaining to the kingdom of God." At one of these seasons, Thomas was perfectly convinced, and, with a profound reverence and adoration, cries, "My Lord,

and my God!" He appeared upon another occasion, "to above five hundred brethren at once," most of whom were alive when St. Paul recorded it. 1 Cor. xv. 6. Surely it was impossible that all these witnesses could be deceived, and it is equally impossible they could mean to deceive others; for

3. *They were credible witnesses*, they were sufficient judges of what they saw and heard, and they could have no temptation to impose upon the world. No temporal advantage could be looked for; but on the contrary, all the terrors of persecution, which many of them actually endured; but they lived and died steadfastly witnessing to this fundamental truth.

4. *The very Heathen admitted the fact.* Pilate wrote to Tiberius the Roman emperor, assuring him that Christ, who was a very extraordinary person, and who had been put to death at Jerusalem, was risen again. And Tiberius proposed to the senate at Rome, that his name should be enrolled among the number of their gods.

5. *The weakness of those who denied the fact* tends to its confirmation. The soldiers, who composed the guard, being affrighted by the earthquake, which happened at the moment of the resurrection, ran into the city to inform their employers what had taken place. Upon which the elders called a council, to consider what must be done to prevent the belief of Christ's resurrection: when it was determined to bribe the soldiers, and put this lie in their mouths—"Say ye, his disciples came by night and stole him away, *while he slept.*" What a palpable contradiction does this excuse contain! If the soldiers were asleep, how could they know this? and if they were not asleep, how could the disciples effect it? But they were *not* asleep. It was death to a Roman soldier to sleep on his watch. And who, that considers the cowardice of the disciples at the time, can ever believe that they would venture upon so difficult and hazardous a business? But the priests had the villany to invent the lie, the soldiers had the baseness to propagate it, and the Jews had the folly to believe it; justly may God give up men to "strong delusion to believe a lie," who will not be persuaded, even by miracles, to believe the truth.

Surely these are *infallible* proofs, that we may safely express our certainty of the event, by saying, "The Lord is risen *indeed!*" The important fact being thus ascertained, let us in the last place consider the text, as

III. The language of Joy.

In prospect of this grand event, the pro-

phet says, Psalm cxviii. 24, "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will be glad and rejoice therein." The world never saw such a day before. There was joy in heaven, and joy on earth.

"A morning then dawned, which is to be followed by no evening; a brighter sun rose upon the world, which is to set no more; a day began, which shall never end; and night and darkness departed to return not again." "Then were the disciples *glad* when they saw the Lord;" and well they might! They had often seen him with delight, but never so much as now. Christ himself proposes this as an argument of joy—"I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold *I am alive for evermore!* Amen." Consider we now the causes of joy.

1. Hereby the truth of his mission was fully confirmed. This is the *Broad Seal* of heaven, affixed to his credentials; "The sign of Jonas the prophet," to which he referred. "He was declared to be the Son of God, *with power*, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Rom. i. 4. He was publicly demonstrated to be the Son of God, by the immediate power of the Holy Spirit; owned in the face of the world, and freed from all suspicion of being an impostor.

2. The sufficiency and acceptableness of his sacrifice was hereby acknowledged. The apostle truly argues, 1 Cor. xv. 17. If Christ be not risen, we are yet *in our sins*—under the guilt and power of them, condemned for ever; since they could never be taken away but by the sacrifice of Christ, and if he were not risen, there could be no proof that he had taken them away. But, blessed be God, he is risen, that our faith and hope might rise too. *The God of Peace* hath brought again from the dead the Great Shepherd of the sheep; for he was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. When he was discharged from the prison of the grave, God declared, in effect, that the ransom price was paid, the full penalty of the law which required death was borne, justice was entirely satisfied, reconciliation was made, and pardon and peace procured through the blood of atonement.

Hence spring the lively hopes of the Christian. Thus Peter sang—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." Thus Paul triumphed, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge

of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, *yea, rather that is risen again.*" Rom. viii. 33.

3. The resurrection of Christ is the cause of our spiritual resurrection, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. This is what St. Paul principally designed in that pious wish—"That I may know *the power of his resurrection!*" Phil. iii. 10—to experience that divine power in my soul, quickening me to a life of grace, which Christ experienced in quickening his dead body in the grave;" and, indeed, it requires a power no less. None but God can quicken a poor, lifeless, carnal soul, dead in pleasure, dead to God, dead in sin. But, virtually, all believers were "quickened together with Christ:" the whole body was quickened together, the members with the head; and, in due time, by virtue of union with him, and the power of the Spirit in them, they shall be "planted together both in the likeness of his death, and of his resurrection;" that so, as "he died unto sin, once, but now liveth unto God," so shall they be "dead indeed unto sin, but alive to God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. vi. 10.

4. The resurrection of Christ is a cause of joy, as it was introductory to his ascension to heaven, his intercession there, and setting up his new and everlasting kingdom. Immediately after he arose, he said to Mary—"Go to my brethren; and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and unto my God and your God." All this was no less necessary to our complete salvation, than his sufferings and death. Because he lives, his people shall live also. Because he intercedes, "he is able to save them to the uttermost." Because he reigns, they shall be secured. Because he is enthroned, they shall also be glorified. The resurrection necessarily preceded all these, and therefore with them is a cause of joy unspeakable.

5. The resurrection of Christ affords to believers a certain pledge, and infallible assurance of their joyful resurrection to eternal life. The one is inseparably connected with the other; they stand or fall together: for, saith St. Paul, "If Christ rose from the dead, how say some among you, that there is no resurrection of the dead?—we have testified of God, that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be the dead rise not. But now is Christ risen, and become *the first-fruits* of them that slept." Jesus Christ arose as a public person; as the forerunner and representative of all his people. He arose as a

mighty conqueror over death, and his resurrection was graced with that of many bodies of the saints, who appeared to their friends in Jerusalem, to testify the grand event. Thus, "as by Adam came death, by Jesus Christ came the resurrection of the dead;" and, as surely as the first-fruits were gathered, so surely shall the whole harvest be safely collected. Of all that were given to Christ, the bodies of his people included, nothing shall be lost; and he has promised to raise them up at the last day, for "they are the children of the resurrection."

APPLICATION.

AND NOW—How are our hearts affected by this glorious subject? The first disciples were filled with joy; they congratulated each other, saying, "the Lord is risen indeed!" The fact is now familiar to us, so that the relation may not occasion *wonder*; but, are we satisfied as to the *certainty* of it? If it be *not* true, there is no truth in Christianity. If it *be* true, then Christianity is also true. The whole religion of Christ stands on this firm foundation, and is so connected with it, that every part is confirmed together with it. This established the whole revelation that he made of God, and heaven, and hell. This ratifies all his doctrines concerning man as a sinner, and himself as a Savior. It confirms his authority to rule and govern the Church; and it obliges us to believe that he will fulfil all his promises to his people, and all his threatenings to his enemies. And it especially strengthens our faith in the belief of the general resurrection at the last day. For, after *his* resurrection, thus evidenced, "Why should it be thought incredible that God should raise the dead? Is any thing too hard for the Lord? All things are possible to him. He *can* raise the dead, for he is Almighty; and he *will* raise them, for he has promised to do so."

There shall then be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust. *All men* shall be raised. But, O, in what a different manner, and to what different destinations! Hear how Christ himself describes it. "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." How important is our present state and conduct! We shall come forth from our graves such as we enter in: and how soon may we enter! What then is our present state?

Are we convinced of sin? Humbled for sin? Have we believed in Jesus, and fled for refuge to him? Does our faith work by love, so that we *do good*? This is the proper fruit and evidence of faith, and what will be called over at the judgment-day. O that then we may be "found in Christ," justified by his righteousness; while our faith in that righteousness is justified by its good and holy fruits!

The Lord is risen! Blessed and delightful truth! The Lord is risen, indeed! Then we may say with Job, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," and because he liveth, I shall live also. He is the resurrection and the life. Believing in him, I shall *never* die. John 11. What have I to fear? God is reconciled; he is the God of peace, who raised up Jesus from the dead. Justice is satisfied, for the debt is discharged, and the prisoner is released. If any accusation is made, I have "the answer of a good conscience, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead," for "who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again."

And if we are "thus risen with Christ, through the faith of the operation of God," let us "seek those things which are above;" let us "set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Are we united to Christ? He is in heaven preparing places for us, let us follow him in the affections and desires of our hearts. This world is not our rest and portion. "We are dead" to it, by profession and obligation, "and our life is hid with Christ in God." The life of grace is a secret life, of which Christ is the author and the keeper; and, "when Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory."—When he who began, who supports, and will complete the spiritual life in us, shall appear as the Judge of the world in all his glory, then shall our mortal bodies be quickened by his Spirit which dwelleth in us, and resemble his own glorious body; then shall the creature itself, (the animal frame,) be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and be introduced into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. "So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

"With joy, like Christ's, shall every saint
His empty tomb survey:
Then rise with his ascending Lord,
To realms of endless day."

PRAYER.—ACCEPT our praises, O God, that Jesus Christ, thy beloved Son, died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; and that he rose again from the dead, on the third day, according to the Scriptures. We bless thee for the clear and convincing evidence of the certainty of our Savior's resurrection. We bless thee that he who was delivered for our offences, was raised again for our justification, that our faith and hope might be in thee. Grant, O Lord, that we may know and feel the power of his resurrection. May we be quickened through Christ; that being delivered from condemnation, we may live to thee. May the Spirit of life and grace dwell within us, and render us spiritually-minded, which is life and peace. May the life which we live in the flesh be henceforth a life of faith in thy dear Son. We rejoice that, because he lives, his people shall live also. Prepare us, O Lord, to behold his glory in the world above. When absent from the body, may we be present with the Lord; and when he shall come the second time, may our vile bodies, which must see corruption, be transformed into the likeness of his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself. Hear us, Father of mercies, for his sake; and unto him, with thyself and the Holy Spirit, be glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON XLVII.

THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST.

Acts ii. 4. And they were filled with the Holy Ghost.

AMONG the ancient predictions of Gospel times and Gospel blessings, the prophecy of Joel is none of the least—"It shall come to pass in the last days," saith God, "*I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,*" &c. St. Peter, under the immediate influence of that Spirit, assures us in this chapter, verse 16, that the promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost—"This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." John the Baptist, the harbinger of Christ, had also said to his disciples, "I indeed baptize you with *water*, but he shall baptize you with the *Holy Ghost*, and with *fire*." Our Lord himself comforted his disciples with a fresh promise of his great blessing: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, which is the Holy Ghost; the Spirit of truth; who shall teach you all things; who shall be in you, and abide with you for ever." John xiv. 16, 17, 26. Our risen Savior, when just about to ascend up to glory, renewed the promise, assuring them it should be fulfilled in a few days, and commanded them to abide in Jerusalem till it was accomplished. In dependence upon his word, and expectation of the blessing, "they all continued, with one accord, in prayer and supplication."

The joyful day arrived,—It was the *Lord's day*—It was also the day of *Pentecost*; a day observed by the Jews in memory of giving the law at Mount Sinai, about 1500 years before. On this day they presented the first fruits of their harvest to God. How highly was this day honored! A new sanction was given to the observation of the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath; the law of faith was first published from Mount Sion; and the first fruits of a glorious harvest of saved sinners were presented to God. And thus our Lord, who had been crucified at the Passover feasts, fifty days before, was glorified at the feast of weeks; upon both which occasions there was a vast assemblage of people at Jerusalem.

"The day of Pentecost was fully come." The disciples, obedient to their Master's order, were assembled together, with unanimous affection, in the same place, waiting for the promised comforter; when "suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting." This was not only to engage their attention, but to serve as an emblem of the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit on the minds of men: for by the energy of his sacred operations the whole world was to be shaken. Our Lord had made use of the emblem of wind, or air in motion, when he discoursed with Nicodemus on regeneration—"The wind bloweth where it listeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." As the wind, or air, as the food of natural life, so is the Holy Spirit the beginner or supporter of spiritual life. Thus Jesus, after his resurrection, "*breathed* upon the apostles, saying, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." John xx. 22. Perhaps he alluded to the creation of man at first, when "the Lord God breathed into his nostrils the *breath of life* (or lives,) and man became a living soul." Gen. ii. 7. As the *vital air* is necessary to our existence in the body, so the Spirit of God is necessary to our spiritual existence, or living to God. There was a striking emblem of the same kind, in the parable of the dry bones, Ezek. xxxvii. When Ezekiel, according to God's command, prophesied to them, "*there was a noise*, and a shaking; the bones came together; the flesh came upon them; and the skin covered them; but there was *no breath* in them; then the Lord said, Prophesy to the wind, and say, Come from the four winds, O breath of the Lord, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." This parable, or vision, fitly represents, not only the political state

of the Jews and their recovery, but also the deplorable condition of men, dead in trespasses and sins, and their revival to spiritual life by the word and Spirit of Christ; and it shows there may be a lifeless form of godliness, but that the power and life is from the Holy Ghost, "for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." This great truth seems to have been intimated by "the mighty rushing wind."

Another very remarkable sign accompanied the descent of the Spirit on the disciples—"There appeared unto them *cloven tongues, like as of fire*, and it sat upon each of them;" a bright appearance over the head of each, resembling a tongue, terminating in several points—a very suitable emblem of the "gift of tongues," which was then granted to them; for, at that moment, "they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with *other tongues*, as the Spirit gave them utterance." The intention of this miracle was to enable them, at once, to speak the language of every country to which they might be sent to preach the Gospel; and this ability was attained, not in the ordinary and slow way of learning a foreign tongue, as we do, but in a moment, as an attestation to the truth of the Gospel. The dividing of tongues at Babel, proved the unhappy means of losing the true knowledge of the true God; but by this new division of tongues, the knowledge of God in Christ was restored, and readily communicated to men of every nation. A specimen of this was immediately afforded: for as this happened at the time of a great festival, there were then in Jerusalem devout Jews, who did not usually reside there, but *sojourned* there, having visited the temple from all parts of the known world; and when, upon the report of what had happened, the multitude were gathered together, they were quite confounded and amazed; for every one of this various assembly heard one or other of the apostles and disciples, as they addressed themselves by turns to people of a different language, speaking to them in his own proper dialect. And they were all amazed at this wonderful event, knowing that the speakers were all Galileans: yet did they, who before knew no language but their own, speak to this mixed assembly in a great variety of tongues.

This was a wonderful testimony to the truth of the Gospel which they preached; and it was intended to put an honor upon preaching the word: it is the appointment of God for the conversion of sinners; it is

"the power of God to salvation;" and therefore the first miracle, after the Spirit was given, was to enable his servants to preach it.

The tongues were of *fire*. Thus the prophecy was fulfilled—"he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with *fire*." And does not this emblem denote the *illuminating* and *animating* nature of divine truth?—When the Gospel is attended with the power of the Spirit, it both *enlightens* and *warms* the heart. Gospel truths are not cold speculations; they afford both light and heat; they purify the mind, purge away the dross of sensuality, and make the soul mount heavenward. Thus the hearts of the two disciples "burnt within them," when Jesus walked with them and opened the Scriptures. Come, O celestial flame, come, and sit upon *us* also; enlighten *our* darkness, purify our affections, consume our corruptions, and fill us with thyself!

And do not these *tongues of fire* speak a lesson to all the *ministers* of the Gospel? Do they not intimate the manner in which they ought to preach the truth?—Not with cold indifference or frozen formality, but, like John, who was "a burning and a shining light," with fervency of spirit, and vigor of affections, as men in earnest, believing and feeling what they speak, anxious for the glory of Christ, and eager to win souls.

What was the *subject* which first engaged the heaven-taught tongues of the disciples?—*The wonderful works of God*.—"We do hear them speak in our own tongues—the wonderful works of God"—the great things of God—the magnificent, stupendous things of God. And what were they? Surely they were those "things of Christ" which the Spirit was given to show them, that they might "glorify him;" the person, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, together with this effusion of the Spirit; in a word, the glorious salvation of the Son of God; and these will always be the favorite topics of those ministers whose tongues are touched with the flame of the altar.

The multitude who witnessed this remarkable scene, were all in a mixture of amazement and perplexity, and said to one another, What can this mean; the pious and devout were thus affected; but their minds were prepared to listen to the voice of God, as soon as they were convinced it was his. Others, probably the native Jews, who understood none of these foreign languages, and heard only

unintelligible sounds, derided them, ascribing their preaching to intoxication. "These men," said they, "are full of new wine." Let us not wonder, if, in our day, the preaching of the Gospel is treated in the same manner. There always have been mockers, to whom the Gospel of Christ has been foolishness.—The Lord pity and pardon them!

Then Peter, full of the Holy Ghost, standing up with the eleven apostles, lifted up his voice and addressed the multitude. He begged them to have so much candor, as not rashly to conclude them to be men overcome with liquor, especially by nine o'clock in the morning; an hour, in which it should seem no Jew was ever known to be drunk. But he directs their attention to a well-known passage of Scripture, a prophecy of Joel, in which the Lord says—*It shall come to pass, in the last days, that I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants, and on my handmaidens, I will pour out, in those days, of my Spirit, and they shall prophesy: and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.* The apostle declares this prophecy to be then fulfilling; and proceeds to show them that Jesus of Nazareth, whom God approved among them by many miracles, and whom they had lately crucified, was the true Messiah, the Son of God; and that, while they gratified their own wicked passions in putting him to death, they had fulfilled the divine decrees concerning him. But that all their malice had been in vain, for God had raised him up, according to the prophecies of David. Peter declares himself and his brethren witnesses of his resurrection from the dead, and affirms that his divine master, having ascended to heaven, had sent down, on that day, the promised Spirit, whose operations on his disciples they now beheld. The design of this sermon was to convince them of sin, which is the first work of the Holy Spirit; and the Lord crowned it with vast success. Multitudes were pierced to the heart with a sense of their guilt, and especially with the guilt incurred by the murder of Christ; and, filled with terror and perplexity, they applied to the apostles for advice, saying, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter, agreeably to the Lord's direction, "preached repentance and remission of sins in his name, beginning at Jerusalem." Here is a fine specimen of Gospel

preaching: he exhorts the vilest sinners to repent; encouraging them thereto by the hope of the full pardon of all their sins, upon believing in Jesus; "and with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation."

Wonderful was the success of this day—three thousand souls converted to God at once! Most of them, probably, bigoted Jews, ignorantly attached to the law of Moses, and bitter enemies of Jesus Christ. Many of them, perhaps, had cried, "Crucify him, crucify him!" and had said, "his blood be upon us and upon our children." Surprising grace! What mercy, what power, was that day displayed! What cannot God do? Three thousand *converted*; not merely alarmed, but changed in heart. Their sincerity was manifest: they sacrificed all their worldly interest to Christ: the pardon of sin filled their hearts with gladness: they were all love, and liberality: and they continued steadfast in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers; praising God, and having favor with all the people.

Glorious confirmation, this, of the truth of the Gospel! Delightful encouragement to the preachers of it! Charming specimen of its happy effects, and blessed first fruits of an extensive harvest! O for another out-pouring of the blessed Spirit upon the Churches! Such we expect, in fulfilment of many precious promises. In the meantime, may we be the happy subjects and witnesses of the ordinary work of the Spirit in the conversion of sinners, and in the edification of the saints. And this *stated work* of the Holy Spirit is what we shall now, in the second place, consider.

We have taken a brief view of the glorious events which took place on the day of Pentecost. We have seen the apostles, and probably the rest of the hundred and twenty disciples, endued with the gift of tongues. This gift, together with the power of healing diseases, casting out devils, with many other miraculous works, was long continued in the Church; perhaps above an hundred years. These are generally called the *extraordinary* gifts of the Spirit. These have long since ceased. When Christianity was established, there was no longer occasion for them. But, have all the operations of the Spirit ceased? Some say so: but we deny it. We allow that the *extraordinary powers* just mentioned are withdrawn: but we affirm, and think it an affirmation of prime im-

portance, that the *gracious influences* of the Holy Spirit, on the minds of believers, are still continued, and that there is no true vital religion without them.

The *extraordinary gifts* at first possessed by Christians, did not, necessarily, imply those *gracious influences* for which we plead. It is probable that some had the former, who were destitute of the latter; for St. Paul, 1 Cor. xiii. 1, &c. seems to intimate, that a person might speak with various tongues, have the gift of prophecy, understand all mysteries, and work miracles, and yet not have *love*, an eminent "fruit of the Spirit;" from which we conclude, that the ordinary and gracious operations of the Spirit upon the souls of men may be continued, although his miraculous gifts are withdrawn: and we shall prove that the former are promised to be continued in the Church, and that they are now as necessary to make men Christians, as they were in the apostles' days.

When our Lord promised to send his Holy Spirit to his disciples, he assured them that he should *abide with them FOR EVER*, John xiv. 16. He was to *abide*—to continue with them, not for three or four years, as our Lord had done, but *for ever*; and as this presence of the Comforter was to supply the place of Christ on earth, we may safely conclude, that the promise extended not to the apostles only, but like his intercession, John xvii. 20, "to them also who should believe on him, through their word," even unto the end of the world.

The Holy Spirit is promised, John vii. 38, as the common privilege of all believers. "He that believeth in me, out of his belly, or heart, shall flow rivers of living water. This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." This promise is not confined to believers of the first century, or to the age of miracles; it is as much a promise to believers at large, as any other in the New Testament. A similar promise is made, John iv. 14.

The Holy Spirit is said to *dwell* in believers, 1 Cor. iii. 16. and vi. 19. "The Spirit of God dwelleth in you;" "your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost." This is spoken to the whole body of Corinthian Christians, without a single hint that the blessing was intended to be confined to them, or to Christians of that age only. Were we to admit that expressions of this kind, respecting the Spirit, must be confined to the first believers, we should be obliged to admit the same restriction as to all the privileges, tempers, and duties of Christians in general. And indeed, those who deny the work of the Spirit do gene-

rally give up all the essentials of the Gospel, and leave us nothing but a system of mere morality—a refined heathenism, graced with the name of Christ. And we may seriously "advise persons to be cautious of confining the Spirit to, primitive times, lest they confine Heaven to primitive times, and so miss of it themselves; for indeed there is no going to Heaven without receiving the Holy Spirit."

This will appear still more clearly, if we consider *for what purposes* he is given to the Church; we shall then see that there is always the same occasion for his gracious influences as there was at first.

The whole dispensation of the Gospel is called—*The ministration of the Spirit*, 2 Cor. iii. 8. The whole business of Gospel Salvation, from first to last, is in the hands of the Spirit. Not only at first, but in all ages, he calls, qualifies, and assists the ministers of the Gospel in preaching it; and all its efficacy in the world is from the power of his grace.

Illumination is his work. No truth of the Gospel is rightly understood but by his teaching. He was promised as "the Spirit of truth," who was to "glorify Christ," by "showing the things of Christ" to men. This is fully proved by those words of St. Paul, 1 Cor. ii. 14. "The natural man (that is, every man by nature) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; *neither can he know them*, because they are spiritually discerned;" that is, they are known only by the teaching of the Spirit, in the use of the word. Now, as all real Christians are illuminated and taught of God, it is evidently necessary that they should all have the Spirit; and if the Spirit be not given, then no man in the world knows, or can know, the things of God.

Again, all real Christians are *praying persons*; but no man knows "how to pray, and what to pray for," without his assistance; and therefore it is mentioned, Rom. viii. 26, as the common privilege of all believers, that "the Spirit itself helpeth our infirmities" in this duty; which shows that all Christians, in all ages, need the influence of the Spirit.

Our Savior, in his discourse with Nicodemus, (John iii.) strongly insisted on the necessity of *regeneration*, or the new birth, solemnly declaring, that "unless a man be born again, or born of the Spirit, he could not be saved." This then shows, that every Christian must needs have the Spirit, for he is the author of that inward change, without which no man is inwardly a Christian.

Sanctification is also the privilege of all

true believers: they are "elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through *sanctification of the Spirit*." 1 Pet. ii. 2. No man can be saved who is not sanctified, and no man can be sanctified but by the Spirit.

The Holy Ghost was promised "to convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment." But will any person say, it is less necessary now to be convinced of sin, &c. than at first? Can there be any repentance without it? Certainly not: and if not, then the Spirit is as necessary as ever.

He is also called the *Spirit of Faith*. He is the *Comforter*, the *Seal*, the *Witness*, the *First Fruits* of Heaven. No man then can have faith in Christ, spiritual joy and comfort, nor any evidence for Heaven, unless he have the Holy Spirit.

This might be more abundantly proved from a great number of texts and arguments, but the narrow limits of a short sermon forbid.*

APPLICATION.

Have ye received the Holy Ghost? said St. Paul, to some early disciples. We ask the same question—*Have ye received the Holy Ghost?* We have proved the necessity of his sacred influences: do we know any thing of them by experience? Remember what the Scripture says, Rom. viii. 9. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." And how awful must their portion be, who are not his! The whole world is under the dominion either of the good Spirit of God, or the evil spirit, "who worketh in the hearts of all the children of disobedience." It is therefore of the greatest importance for us to consider, under whose influence we act.—"If we sow to the flesh, we shall reap corruption; if we sow to the Spirit, we shall of the Spirit reap eternal life." By our fruits are we known. "The fruits of the Spirit, are love, and joy, and peace, and goodness, and meekness, and temperance."—"The works of the flesh are adultery, fornication, hatred, drunkenness, &c. and they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." What does our conduct say? O conscience, be faithful—give a true verdict! Does it appear that you are a stranger to his grace, in enlightening the mind, renewing the will, convincing of sin, leading the soul to Christ, and

sanctifying the whole man? Know, then, that your state is deplorable and dangerous. May you be sensible of it: and, if you are, you will earnestly pray to God to give you his Spirit, which he has promised to them that ask him.

To those who know the Lord, the effusion of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost will appear exceedingly glorious. Such persons will rejoice to think that his gracious influence is still continued in the church. Above all, they will be continually desirous to experience it. All the light, love, peace, joy, and consolation, to be found in the religion of Jesus, spring from his constant operations. Honor, then, this blessed Spirit, by seeking his daily assistance. When you pray, read, hear, or perform any spiritual action, seek his help. Thus shall you "be filled with all joy and peace in believing;" thus shall "the love of God be shed abroad in your hearts;" thus shall you "abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost;" and having this experience, you possess "the seal" of God, and "the earnest" of heaven; "for he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who hath also given us of his Spirit." This is the grand evidence of our being Christians indeed: and "hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit."

To the blessed Spirit of all grace; to Jesus Christ the only Savior; and to the Father of mercies; the one covenant God of our salvation, be glory, in all the churches, world without end. Amen.

"Let thy kind Spirit in my heart
For ever dwell, O God of love!
And light, and heavenly peace impart,
Sweet earnest of the joys above."

PRAYER.—OUR Father who art in Heaven, if we, being evil, know how to give good gifts to our children, wilt thou not give thy Holy Spirit to them who ask thee? Blessed be thy name for his glorious descent and miraculous operations on the day of Pentecost. Blessed be thy name for the gracious promise, that he should abide with the church for ever. Without him we can do nothing. Impart, we beseech thee, this heavenly gift. May the Holy Spirit be our teacher, leading us into all truth. May he be our Sanctifier, subduing all our iniquities, and sanctifying us in body, soul, and spirit. May he be our Comforter, giving us joy and peace in believing. May he be to us the Earnest of the heavenly inheritance, sealing us to the day of redemption. Grant that we may be the temples of the Holy Spirit, and that it may be our anxious concern not to grieve him. May we be filled with the Holy Ghost; may we be filled with all the fullness of God. Grant this, O Lord, for the sake of thy dear Son; and to the Father of mercies, the Son of his love, and the Spirit of his grace, be glory and honor for ever and ever. Amen.

* The necessity of Divine Influences is displayed, in a very pleasing manner, by Mr. T. Williams, in his book, called "An Historic Defence of Experimental Religion, as supported by the authority of Scripture, and the experience of the wisest and best men in all ages," &c.

SERMON XLVIII.

CHRIST OUR BENEFACTOR.

Acts x. 38. Who went about doing good.

BY THE REV. SAMUEL GREATHEED.*

THE apostle Peter said this to our Lord Jesus Christ. The occasion of his saying it, shows us that the Spirit of God works upon the minds of men, and inclines them to serve him, even before they know how to serve him in a right manner. In this case, they are very glad and thankful to be taught the will of God. Do *you*, brethren, wish to know how you may please God, and become "wise to salvation?" If we do not wish to do you *good*, we should not come to you. The Lord is altogether good, and is always doing good.* We may surely hope he will do us good *now*, if we are truly desirous of knowing his will.

We find from this chapter, that the words of the text were spoken by Peter to Cornelius, who was an officer in the Roman army, and had been brought up a heathen, and an idolater. He was quartered among the Jews, who were the only nation at that time that knew there is only *one* God, who is eternal and holy. Cornelius learned from them this doctrine, which is the ground of all true religion; and he prayed to God, as every body should do, who believes there is a God. If *you* do not pray to God, you are worse than the heathens, for they do not know there is a God to pray to. Besides this, we are told that Cornelius feared God with all his house. Do *you* try to lead your families and friends to know and serve God? If not, you see, that instead of being true Christians, you come far short of what Cornelius did, before he ever heard the Gospel of Christ.

They who do not pray to God are without excuse, because God assures us, in his word, that he hears and answers prayer. The history of Cornelius gives a proof of it. The apostle Peter was preaching the Gospel at a place about forty miles distant

from the town where Cornelius lived. The Lord informed Cornelius of this, and told him to send for Peter to come and instruct him. Peter accordingly came, and preached Jesus Christ to all who had met on the occasion; showing them how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power; *who went about doing good*. He told them also much more about Jesus Christ; and indeed, if he had not preached about Christ, he need not have come there. "Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life;" by whom alone a sinner can find mercy with God. Wherever the apostles went, they preached Christ. This is one mark by which you may know who they are that preach most like the apostles. If you hear little or nothing about Christ, you are likely to get little or no good.

The apostle Peter informed Cornelius and his family, that the doctrine he had to deliver was the same which they must have heard of, as it had been published throughout all the neighboring country of Judea; and had, indeed, been first preached in Galilee, the country where they then were. You may, perhaps, think it strange, that Cornelius had not inquired about it sooner; but the reason probably was, that Christianity was then everywhere spoken against; the apostles and disciples of Christ were suspected, even by their own countrymen, the Jews, to be either mad or wicked men, because they worshipped God in a way different from that which was established by law; and because they continued preaching Christ to their neighbors, when it was opposed and forbidden by the great people and rulers. If you read the book of the Acts, you will see this was the case: and you will not be surprised at it, if you consider that Jesus Christ himself was *crucified*, (which is like being hanged in our country) for both the rulers and the mob accused him of the vilest crimes. But the prejudices of Cornelius were now removed, and it was an excellent disposition which he discovered, when he said to the apostle, "Now, therefore, we are all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God." May the Lord give us *now* the same disposition!

One thing which Peter told Cornelius concerning Jesus Christ was, that "he went about doing good." If Cornelius had heard any thing of Christ before, it might be that he went about doing *harm*. Christ had been charged by the Jews with treason and blasphemy. He had been tried, condemned, and executed, as a malefactor. Cornelius was likely, from the common re-

* This discourse was composed by Mr. Greatheed solely for the use of some persons who visited the villages near Newport-Pagnell, Bucks, and who read written or printed sermons to the people, and before the publication of the first volume of the Village Sermons; consequently without any intention of its publication from the press. But it appears in this volume by the particular desire of Mr. Burder, who wishes it to stand as a token of his unfeigned respect for the author, and a memorial of their mutual friendship.

port, to have a very bad opinion of Christ. He determined, however, to hear all that Peter had to say in behalf of Christ; and then to judge for himself. Let us all be careful how we take matters upon *hearsay*, especially about religion, and religious people.

Peter convinced Cornelius that Jesus Christ went about doing *good*. So far as you know the history of Christ, you are doubtless convinced, that he did not go about to hurt people, but to do them good. Even those ignorant and foolish persons, who deny that Christ was sent from heaven, own that he did good in some respects. But what we should desire to know is, Whether he *can*, and *will*, do us good? If we do not obtain good from Christ in this life, and in that to come, we might as well never have heard of him.

As to the *power* of Christ to do us good, we have reason to trust in it, from the wonderful power he had to do good to all as long as he was upon earth. His works were such as no man ever did before nor since. He satisfied the hunger of many thousands of people with a very few small loaves and fishes. By merely touching, or even speaking to weak and sick persons, he cured them of the most desperate diseases. He raised up several people from death to life; one man, who had been buried some days, was restored to his afflicted relations. In that age of the world, when God was so little known, the devil was worshipped by many; and he was permitted to torment the bodies of mankind in a shocking manner: but no wicked spirit could keep possession of any person who was brought to Christ for relief. One word from him was enough to restore any one to perfect health and reason. The power of Christ was also shown in preserving his disciples in a dreadful storm at sea. He said to the wind and the waves, "Be still," and they became perfectly calm in a moment. But it is not possible now to tell you a hundredth part of the proofs that Jesus gave of his power to do good to those around him. The four Gospels are full of such accounts: yet, at the close of the last, St. John says, "there were also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." People in general are fond of reading and hearing wonderful things. Now there is no true history, nor scarcely any story, that contain things so wonderful as those which Jesus did for the good of mankind. Yet they are all certainly true, for they were

written by four different persons, who saw what they relate; who were honest and good men; who did good like their Master; and suffered themselves to be put to death rather than deny what they knew to be true, or keep silence about it. You would do well, as often as you can, to take up your Bibles, and read the history of Jesus Christ; and also consider, whenever you read it, what was his reason for doing good in such surprising ways? Why was the history of his actions written over and over again, and handed down to us, so many hundred years after? The whole must surely be meant for *our* good. It would be tantalizing to you, to tell you of his doing so much good to others, if *you* could get no good from him. You suffer pains and wants; your relations and neighbors are afflicted; if Christ was now upon earth, he might do them the same good he formerly did to others. But if you read the Scripture with care, you may see that Jesus took more pains to *teach* people than to heal them. He performed all these miracles to gain their attention, and their belief of what he taught. His doctrine could do them much greater good than the healing of their diseases. If you could be certain that God forgave all your sins, and would give you eternal life, would you not think it a greater benefit than merely to be cured of a bodily complaint? The doctrine of Christ was, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." And, accordingly, he healed one man of the palsy, on purpose to show he could forgive his sins. When the poor creature was brought to our Lord, his first words to him were, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee." Some who were present, murmured at his pretending to forgive sins; but he soon silenced them. "That ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins," said he, turning to the poor man, "I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go to thine house." And immediately he arose, took up his bed, and went forth before them all. See the 2d chapter of St. Mark.

Now, brethren, what think ye of the *power* of Christ to do good? Nothing could be more true or just than the principle upon which the Jews reasoned among themselves—"Who can forgive sins, but God only?" But you see our Lord Jesus Christ *did* forgive sins; and proved his power to do so, by working a miracle. It is plain, therefore, that Jesus Christ is God. All of you have, probably, been told so

from your infancy; but now you see it cannot be otherwise. On this account, the Scriptures call him "*Immanuel*:" which signifies "*God with us*:" they also call him "*the Son of God*," having the same nature with his Father; and they declare, that "all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father," for He and the Father are one: they also call him "*the Word of God*," and then say, "*the Word was God*."

Now as our Lord Jesus Christ is "God over all, blessed for evermore," his power to do good must be boundless, and always the same. You have seen that he worked a miracle to prove, that whilst on earth, he had power to forgive sins; and surely, now he is exalted to heaven, he must have the same power. If, whilst he was on earth, in the form of a servant, he had this power, you cannot reasonably doubt that, now he reigns in heaven, king of the world, "he is able even to save to the uttermost, all who come to God by him."

And do you not all *need* his pardoning mercy? Have you not transgressed his holy law? Remember, it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in *all* things, commanded in the book of the law, to do them." Galatians, iii. 10. If you have obeyed it in *some* respects, or even in *most* things, this will not excuse you for having disobeyed or neglected it in others. The law of God admits of no composition; and makes no allowance for any failure whatever. The Apostle James assures us (ch. ii. ver. 10.) that "whosoever shall keep the whole law, excepting in one point, and offends in that, he is guilty of all." And the reason he gives for this is, that it is the same authority which enforces each of the commandments; so that whoever disobeys any one of them, tramples upon all the authority of God. Instead, therefore, of inquiring who can forgive sins *but* God, it might be asked, How can God himself forgive sins committed against that law, which he himself hath given to mankind for the rule of their conduct, and by which he has appointed that men should be judged?—This question must for ever have perplexed a convinced sinner, if the Gospel had not told us that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them:" for "God made him to be a sin-offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. v. 19. 21. On this ground there is encouragement to hope for pardon. "There is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared." Yea, "it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all accepta-

tion, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." So that, if any of you have been distressed and terrified on account of your sins, you see it is not right for you to *despair* of forgiveness. Christ was crucified, that he might bear the punishment due to your sins; and, after being buried, he performed the greatest miracle of all, in raising up his own body, by his own power, from the grave; in order that he might prove he had fully discharged the debt which sinners had incurred. He afterwards ascended up to heaven; and, in some of his last words to his disciples, said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned." Mark xvi. 15, 16. We are all under condemnation; for all have sinned. No obedience that we can pay in future to the law of God can make amends for past sins. But Christ has power to forgive them, "For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." When a certain person came to Christ on earth, he seemed to doubt his power to help, saying, "If thou *canst* do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us." Jesus said unto him, "If thou *canst believe*, all things are possible to him that believeth." "Lord," answered the poor man, with tears, "I believe; help thou mine unbelief!" So, under your fears about the possibility of your sins being forgiven, go to Jesus by prayer; plead that he has said, "He that believeth shall be saved," and cry, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief."

I hope you are now satisfied as to the *power* of Jesus to do you good. If so, it should be your chief concern to know whether he is *WILLING* also to do you good, and *all* the good that you need. May the Spirit of Christ make you as earnest on this point, as reasonable creatures, with the word of God before them, ought to be! what would it profit you, if you could gain the whole world, and should lose your own souls? You think, perhaps, but little of this *now*. But you are near the hour of death; you don't know *how* near. And if you have your reason then, you will wonder how you could have been so stupid through your lives as not to be concerned, above all things, to know whether Christ was willing to save your souls. It may *then* be too late, and you would, in vain, give the whole world for a few minutes' time like those which we yet have to spend together. But "*now*," I have to declare to you, from the Scriptures, "*now* is the ac-

cepted time; *now* is the day of salvation." "O seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near."

You have heard that Jesus Christ is the ever blessed God: be assured, then, from the gracious character in which God has revealed himself in his word, that he will not despise any soul that is truly humbled and contrite on account of his sin. "The tender mercy of God is over all his works." You see every day, what compassion he shows to the evil and unthankful. His rain descends, and his sun-beams shine, on the land of the wicked, as well as on that of the good. And has he less compassion on your *souls* than on your bodies? By no means. He desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live. "Turn ye;" said the Lord to the rebellious house of Israel, "turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" How long, already, has God delayed avenging himself upon us for sins! Why? "Not that he is slack concerning his promise, but that he is long-suffering to us-ward; not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance:" "for except we repent, we must all perish;" but a godly sorrow works repentance unto salvation.

You have heard that "*God was manifested in the flesh*," in the person of Jesus Christ. Astonishing as it is, it is certain, that he took upon him the form of a servant, suffered infirmity, want, contempt, persecution, and a shameful, miserable death. So wonderful an event must answer some good purpose. The prophecies of the Old Testament concur with the sayings of our Lord himself, and his apostles, in the New Testament, to teach us what was the design of the sufferings and death of Christ. "He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows; was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all." Isa. iii. 4. 6. "I am the good shepherd," said Jesus. "I lay down my life for the sheep. They shall never perish, but I give unto them eternal life." John x. "Whom God hath set forth," says the apostle Paul, "to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Rom. iii. 25, 26. And can any one

believe that Jesus humbled himself as a man, and suffered as if he had been a malefactor, for the sole purpose of *saving sinners*; and yet suspect that he will *refuse salvation* to those that seek it from him? It was for "the joy" of saving sinners that he "endured the cross, disregarding the shame." Well may it then be said, that "there is joy in Heaven over every sinner that repenteth." May you now believe in Christ, that he may "see of the travail of his soul" in your salvation, "and be satisfied."

Consider what is said in the text, "*He went about doing good*." He not only never rejected one request for help, of all the numberless persons who applied to him, but he went about, in order "to seek and save that which was lost." He travelled for this purpose on foot, with much weariness and faintness, from one end of the land of Canaan to the other, again and again. He compares himself to a shepherd, who seeks far and wide for a poor wandering sheep, that never could have found its way back to the fold. So his willingness to do good to sinners is still proved, by his command to those who are intrusted with the Gospel, that they should preach it to all mankind; by his providence, in sending his disciples throughout the world, without which the Gospel would to this day have been unknown in this country; and by the influence of his Spirit upon the heart of all them who are made willing, in the day of his power, to lay hold on the hope set before them; for what but the sovereign grace of God makes any of *you*, who long for his salvation, to differ from the rest, who reject it to their everlasting destruction? If *we* feel any love to God, it is "because he first loved us:" and he hath said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

Brethren, the Scriptures inform us, that besides the two great purposes for which, as we have observed, Christ came into this world, there was a *third*. He came, not only to declare to us the will of God, and to offer himself up for the pardon of our sins, but also—"To leave us an **EXAMPLE** that we might walk in his steps." "He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." We are unworthy to be called *Christians*, if we do not *imitate* him. Let us set his bright and blessed example before us, as the text holds it forth. Let us do all the *good* we can, to those around us, both to their bodies and their souls; yea, even to "our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers;" but especially to

our relations and friends, and to those who serve God. Let us remember Christ's labor and patience in *going about* to do good to those, who either could not or would not come to receive it. We are humbly trying to follow our Lord Jesus Christ, in coming *here* to do you good. Our consciences bear us witness that we earnestly desire your welfare, and have no other end in view. We know nothing that can do you *greater* good, than to lead you to think more of God, and eternity; and to promote in you the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ. We hope that God is visiting you by our means; and that he will, by his Spirit, make this meeting useful to your souls. If you remain strangers and enemies to God, it is not for want of the power or willingness of Christ to do you good. Do not forget what he has said to you on this subject. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present yourselves living sacrifices to him, holy, and acceptable, which is your reasonable service." If you do *not*, every mercy you have received, and the very means of instruction you have now had, must appear against you at the day of judgment.

But if your hearts are now seriously affected with what you have heard; if you feel yourselves to be guilty and helpless creatures; if you earnestly desire the pardon of your sins, through the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to have your minds renewed, and made like the mind that was in him; these things should encourage you to pray to Christ, to depend upon his grace, and to rejoice in the fullness of his salvation. We shall be extremely glad to find that this is the case, with any among you; for we know, that "he who begins a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Christ." "Now, to Him, who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now, and for ever. Amen.

PRAYER.—O LORD our God, thou art good, and doest good to us; and thy tender mercies are over all thy works. All thy works praise thee, and thy saints shall bless thee! they shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness! We bless thee especially for that expression of thy goodness, which thou dost thyself commend, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. We desire to love and to adore him who, while he lived upon earth, went about doing good. May we be interested by faith in all the benefits which flow from the labors of his life and the sufferings of his death! Grant, O Lord, that the mind that was in Christ may be also in us. May our hearts be under the constant influ-

ence of love to thee and love to man! May we not look only on our own things, but also on the things of others! May it be our desire and endeavor to do good to all men, so far as we have opportunity, and especially to them who are of the household of faith! Bless us and make us blessings! We ask it for the Redeemer's sake! Amen.

SERMON XLIX.

THE CHRISTIAN TEMPER.

Philip. ii. 5. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

WHOEVER takes a view of Christianity, as displayed in the precepts and example of Christ, its great founder, must acknowledge it to be a very lovely religion; admirably calculated to promote the happiness of man in the present world, as well as to secure his eternal salvation in the next.

"It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners"—to save them "from their sins:"—not only to deliver them from the wrath to come, which is the wages of sin, but also to restore in them the holy image of God, which they had lost by their fall in Adam. He came, not only to restrain the practice of sin, but to purify the fountain of the heart, from whence the streams of sinful practice proceed.

To effect these great designs, he became a sacrifice for sin; he was made sin for us: he died for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. He procured for us, and sent down to us, the Holy Spirit, the great Sanctifier of the Church. And having given to the world the purest precepts that were ever delivered, he gave infinite force to them, by a perfect example of purity, in his own temper and walk, and has left us this example for our imitation.

All true Christians are followers of Christ; they must walk even as he walked; and in order to this they must possess the same holy temper; or, as it is expressed in the text, "the same mind" must be in them, which was in Christ Jesus. This mind or disposition, is the subject of the present discourse. May the good Spirit of God explain it to us, and produce it in us!

We might express the whole in a single word. LOVE is the mind of Christ; for "God is love." The whole law is fulfilled in love: love to God, and love to man. This filled the heart of the great Redeemer, actuated him in the whole of his obedi-

ence and sufferings, supported him under them, and rendered them acceptable, meritorious and efficacious to the salvation of the Church. This is the mind that was in Christ; this his prevailing disposition; and the principal part of our holiness consists in being like him, and living under the daily influence of love to God, and love to man. But it is necessary to be more particular, and to consider the Christian temper in its several branches. We begin with,

1. HUMILITY. This deserves the first place, both because it is that grace in Christ, to which the text refers, and because it is, in every believer, the *root* of all other graces. Wonderful indeed was the humility of the Son of God, “who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross!” Behold, here, the greatest example of humility that the world ever saw, or ever will see! and this example is proposed to our imitation. And what argument can be so forcible? for, shall the glorious Savior be humble, and the miserable sinner be proud? How preposterous! How absurd!

Pride is natural to apostate man. It was a principal ingredient in the sin of Adam, and every child of his is born proud. Adam got it from the devil, and we get it from Adam. And, yet, it is truly said, “Pride was not made for man;” it ill becomes him. For a *sinner* to be proud, is the most monstrous thing in the world! Nothing is so hateful to God; and if we are born of God, nothing will be so hateful to us. Now faith lays the ax at the root of Pride. Faith beholds the majesty and holiness of God, and shrinks, as it were, into nothing before him. The proud man swells by comparing himself with other sinners: but the Christian compares himself, his conduct, and then his heart, with the most pure, holy, spiritual law of God: this prevents self-righteous boasting, and shows that even his best duties are tinged with sin. He was “alive without the law once; but now the commandment is come, sin revives, and he dies.” This experience will force him to the cross; he will gladly renounce his own works and righteousness, and supremely desire to be found in Christ.”

Let but the Christian think of three things, and it will promote his humility—*what he was—what he is—and what he*

shall be. He *was* a poor, blind, naked, filthy rebel; an enemy to God, and an heir of hell. He *is*, by grace, a pardoned sinner, and an adopted child; but, O, what imperfections in all his graces! What defects in all his duties! What strength in his corruptions! What a disproportion between his obligations, and his returns to God; between his professions, and his practice; between his privileges, and his enjoyments! So that he can cordially unite with a better man than himself in saying, “I am the chief of sinners,” and “less than the least of all saints.” Let him also consider *what he shall be*—he shall be “with Christ;” he shall be “like Christ;” he shall wear a crown of glory; he shall possess a heavenly inheritance; he shall be a king and a priest to God. Amazing prospects! Animating, yet humbling hopes! he will then, with David, sit down, and say, “Who am I, O Lord God, that thou hast brought me hitherto: and, as if this were a small thing in thy sight, thou hast spoken of thy servant’s house for a great while yet to come: and, Is this the manner of men, O Lord? and what more can David say unto thee?”

2. PIETY, or “the fear of God,” or “godliness,” was an eminent branch of the mind that was in the man Christ Jesus. These terms are nearly of the same import, and denote the habitual, prevailing frame of mind in its regard to the blessed God. It is the character of the natural man that he is “ungodly,” “there is no fear of God before his eyes,” he lives “without God in the world,” he is “alienated from the life of God,” “he says to the Almighty, Depart from me.” The very reverse of all this is the temper of the Christian, as it was also of his Master. We learn from the Gospels, and more abundantly from the Psalms, what a spirit of devotion continually animated the human nature of Christ! What reverential fear, what supreme affection, what lively zeal, what fervent prayer! A portion of the same spirit pervades the heart of every real Christian. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” and “the whole duty of man.”—His great duty, his first interest, his chief delight. And this divine principle is implanted in every believer. “I will put my fear in their heart,” is the grand covenant promise, and it is fulfilled to every elect soul, when called by grace. The new-born soul turns naturally to God, as flowers to the sun, or the needle to the pole; and though it may be disturbed or diverted for a time, the heavenly principle within abides and pre-

vails, and the Christian is constrained to say "Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

The spirit of piety will render those acts of religion, which were intolerably burdensome to the unconverted man, natural and pleasant. Religion is no longer his medicine, but his food; not his task, but his delight. And the fear of God will certainly produce a reverence for his name; the Christian cannot be a profane man; he cannot habitually "take in vain," in the light manner of the world, the great and fearful name of the Lord his God. And this principle will insure his sacred regard to the holy Sabbath, the Bible, the house of God, the preached Gospel, the table of the Lord, and every means divinely appointed for his growth in grace.

3. **SPIRITUALITY** is another essential part of the Christian temper. This is a necessary effect of regeneration, for as "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, so that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Every nature generates its own likeness. We derive from our first parent the likeness of his apostate nature, earthly and *sensual*, not having the Spirit; but, if begotten again by the Holy Ghost, we derive from him a nature that is spiritual. Natural men "*mind* earthly things," they understand, pursue and relish only things of a worldly nature, while the things of the Spirit of God are foolishness to them; but the believer, being born from above, minds heavenly things, and sets his affections supremely on things above, and not on things below. This constitutes the grand difference between the children of this world and the children of God; and our future destination will be accordingly; for "to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace." While we are in the world, a due regard must be paid to our worldly callings, for religion, so far from encouraging sloth and idleness, requires us to be "diligent in business;" but it requires us also to be "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." The things of this world, however great and important in some views, will be considered, in the light of eternity, as empty bubbles, insignificant trifles, and childish toys. The Christian weighs every thing in the balance of eternity. He considers what their value will be when he is on a dying bed; and judges how far they may be conducive to his everlasting interest, for he "walks by faith, not by sight."

Besides, he is "crucified to the world, and the world to him," by the cross of

Christ. Our gracious Lord never discovered any taste or relish for the pomps and vanities of this world. As Lord of all, he could have commanded every thing that was noble and great. But it is evident that he poured contempt on worldly grandeur. His whole life, death, and doctrine, tended to stain the pride of human glory, and to sanctify to his humble followers that lowly state he intended for them. Luxury of living, gaiety of dress, and conformity to the vain world, can plead no countenance from the example of Christ; but self-denial, plainness of living and manners, deadness to the world, and heavenly mindedness, are the very mind that was in Christ, and will be in us, if we are his genuine followers.

4. **CONTENTMENT** is another feature of the Christian character. And this will result in a happy degree, from spirituality and heavenly mindedness. A proper view, by faith, of eternal things, and a good hope, by grace, of an interest in them, will occasion a holy indifference about worldly matters, and render us content with our present lot. Of old time, those persons "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, who knew in themselves that they had in heaven a better and more enduring substance." Heb. xi. 34. The way to be happy in this world is not to elevate our station to our mind. The first is, perhaps, impossible; for the ambitious mind of the prosperous man continues to rise with his lot; so that he is never satisfied. The last may, by divine grace, be accomplished. The Christian believes that God reigns, that his providence is universal, that a sparrow does not fall without his observation, and that the very hairs of his head are numbered; and if so, he has reason to conclude, that a special and most gracious providence presides over all his affairs. The believer, therefore, having committed all his concerns to the Lord's care, in the diligent and prudent use of means, will rest satisfied with the disposal of heaven. He will say, "It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good." We are led to expect trouble in this world; man, being born in sin, is born to trouble; and instead of wondering that things are so bad, we have reason to wonder that they are no worse. He who knows the evil of sin, and the plague of his own heart, will say, at the worst of times, "he hath not dealt with me according to my sins, nor rewarded me according to my iniquities." Besides, there is generally some cause for praise,

"There is *Mercy* in ev'ry place,
And *Mercy*, (encouraging thought!)
Gives even affliction a grace,
And reconciles man to his lot."

Thrice happy was the apostle Paul, who could say, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere, and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound, and to suffer need."—Should you think this a difficult lesson, and that, in certain cases, you could not practise it—mark what follows—"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Phil. iv. 11, 12, 13. St. Paul, in himself, was as weak as another man; but he had learned to live upon Christ, and by faith to receive, out of his fullness, grace for grace. Every believer may do the same. And let him remember, this patient temper is "the mind that was in Christ." Through a whole life of poverty and sufferings, here, we read not of a single murmur; and when, in his agony, the bitterest cup that ever was mingled was put into his hands, he said, "The cup which my Father giveth me to drink, shall I not drink of it? Not my will but thine be done."

5. MEEKNESS must also be mentioned as an amiable branch of the Christian temper. Jesus Christ was remarkably meek, and he pronounces a blessing on his meek followers. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." We read of "the gentleness of Christ." How calmly did he endure the contradiction of sinners against himself; how meekly submit to the vilest indignities! Happiest they, who most resemble him! It is a great victory for a man to subdue his own angry temper; and to preserve a sacred composure amidst all the ruffling storms and tempests of cross affairs, affronts, losses, and injuries. This meekness is not the effect of constitution, a temper naturally mild, nor the result of art and deceit; but a truly Christian grace, wrought by the Holy Spirit, arising from self-knowledge, self-possession, a sense of the goodness and love of God; it is seated in the heart, and will discover itself in the countenance and in the language. The meek Christian may be angry; but meekness will restrain his anger within proper bounds, as to the degree, duration, and effects of it; he will not be easily provoked, he will readily forgive, and will acquire that happy useful art—the government of the tongue. A loud, clamorous, boisterous, boasting professor, little resembles the meek Jesus;

but the meek Christian adorns the doctrine of God his Savior, greatly recommends the Gospel of Christ, and enjoys a tranquillity of soul, which is heaven begun on earth—a blessed foretaste of the undisturbed serenity of glorified saints.

6. MERCY was a distinguishing grace in the character of Christ, and must be the prevailing disposition of his followers. Compassion to perishing sinners brought him down from heaven. Compassion dictated all his words, and directed all his actions; and, blessed be God, we have still "a merciful and a faithful High-Priest, who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on those who are out of the way." When the sick and afflicted were brought to Jesus, he had compassion on them, and healed them. When the multitude who followed him from far to hear him preach, were hungry and faint, he had compassion on them, and fed them. He went about doing good. O let us be like him!

Hard as a rock, is the heart of man, by nature. Anger, envy, malice, revenge and selfishness reign, and make men resemble the devil. The greater part of men called Christians "*live to themselves*," and are satisfied if they do *no harm*, though they do *no good*;—are secure, selfish, angry, and peevish; confine their kindness to their relations; do little good but what they are pressed to; esteem all lost that is done for the relief of others; and think it wise to be cautious, and disbelieve the necessities of men: in a word, they make SELF the end of their lives: whatever their profession be, they very little represent or glorify God in the world. But on the contrary, a man whose nature is cured and rectified by grace, freed from pride, envy and selfishness, and thence rendered benevolent and useful to his fellow-men, is the best representation we have of God upon earth, since the human nature of Christ was removed from it.

"Blessed are the merciful," said the benevolent Redeemer, "for they shall obtain mercy." We are not to purchase God's mercy by our mercy; but it is a good evidence of being ourselves "vessels of mercy," when we are inwardly disposed to be merciful. We are exhorted to "put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies." If we have felt the need of mercy, and tasted the sweetness of mercy, we shall find a divine pleasure in being merciful to the sons and daughters of affliction; we shall be forward to give and forgive, to pity and relieve them.

The souls of men claim our first regard. Millions of men are perishing for lack of

knowledge. The merciful man will not only pray for them, but will gladly endeavor to send the glorious Gospel of Jesus to them: he will cast a pitying eye upon the poor ignorant children around him, and promote their religious instruction: he will gladly support the Christian ministry, knowing its important use in the conversion of sinners. Nor will the *bodies* of men be neglected. He will pity and visit the sick; he will feed the hungry; he will clothe the naked: and, in order to do this, he will rather deny himself even lawful indulgences, than be disabled from acts of generosity.—The word of God abounds with exhortations to this disposition; and if there be not a desire and endeavor thus to be useful, we may say, with St. John, “How dwelleth the love of God in him!”

The narrow limits of this discourse prevent the mention of several other branches of this holy temper; as well as a proper enlargement on those already mentioned.—We have room only to propose one more, which is the beauty and strength of them all, namely.

7. SINCERITY.—This is the very soul of all religion; for every Christian grace has its counterfeit. There are men who assume a profession of religion, on purpose the better to deceive others; and pretend to be devout towards God, that they may more effectually cheat and defraud their neighbors.—From this vile hypocrisy, good Lord deliver us!—If there be a place in hell hotter than another, it will be the portion of the hypocrite; for how shall such, “escape the damnation of hell?” Great is the importance of truth and uprightness. The Christian must needs be an honest man, exact and conscientious in all his affairs, conforming himself, in all his dealings, to that golden, that divine rule, *Whatsoever ye would that others should do to you, do ye even that to them.* The Christian will study “simplicity and godly sincerity,” speaking the truth in love, and managing all the affairs of life as under the eye of God, and with a regard to his glory. Happy the man of whom the Lord will testify, as of Nathaniel, “Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!”

APPLICATION.

WE may learn, from what has been said of the Christian temper, how excellent is the religion, and how holy the gospel of Jesus Christ; how admirably calculated to promote godliness, and brotherly kindness, and charity. What a happy world would this be, if men, who profess and call them-

selves Christians, possessed the mind that was in Christ. We may learn also the necessity of something more than *moral-ity*. Men may be honest and harmless; but this is not enough. We see many who are deemed moral characters, who are ungodly, unbelievers, neglecters of Christ, despisers of the Gospel. Let them not suppose that their regard to men will atone for their contempt of God. Let them know, that “without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.”

How vain also is that profession of the truths of the Gospel, which leaves a man destitute of the Christian temper, a slave to his wretched passions, and under the dominion of covetousness, pride, anger, selfishness, and worldly-mindedness! For, some there are, not only negligent of holy tempers, but who despise that preaching which enforces them, calling it legal and low. But it is evident that our Lord insisted much upon inward purity, and pronounced his first blessings upon heavenly dispositions. The apostles abound in similar exhortations, throughout their epistles; nor is he a Christian who does not hunger and thirst after the attainment of them; all believers being “predestinated to be conformed to the image of God’s dear Son.”

On the survey of this brief sketch of the “mind that was in Christ,” who has not cause to blush, and sigh, and say, Holy Jesus, how far am I from possessing thy likeness! One of the ancients, on a like occasion, cried, “Blessed Lord, either these are not thy precepts, or we are not Christians!” But, let me ask, Is this the temper you sincerely and earnestly desire? Do you mourn over your daily defects? Do you see an excellency and a beauty in holiness, and do you ardently long to resemble your Savior? If so, be not dejected. This desire is from the Lord, and is a token for good. Let no believer sit down in sullen despair, and say, when he contemplates the character of Jesus—It is too high and great. I can never master my corruptions, and attain his dispositions. Why not? All things are possible to God: all things are possible to him that believeth. Does not all fullness dwell in Christ? and is it not treasured up for thy use? Go to him for it—make free—it is thine for fetching. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.—Come boldly to the throne of grace, to find grace; there is grace sufficient for thee. Open thy mouth wide, and it shall be filled, and though conscious, like the apostle Paul, that you have not already attained, neither are you

already perfect ; yet, like him, follow after, reach forth unto those things which are before ; press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Look much at Christ ; it will make you like him ; you shall be “ transformed into the same image, from glory to glory ; ” and, ere long, you “ shall see him as he is, ” and “ be satisfied, when you awake, with his likeness. ”

PRAYER.—Most holy God, we bless thee for making known to us thy holy will, not only in the precepts of thy word, but also in the life and character of thy beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Grant that the mind which was in him may be also in us ! May Christ dwell in our hearts by faith ! and may we be rooted and grounded in love ! Give us, we beseech thee, true humility. —May we loathe ourselves on account of our iniquities, and have a deep sense of our daily imperfections ! —Give us, we entreat thee, that holy, filial fear of thee, which is the beginning of wisdom. Put thy fear into our hearts, that we may not sin against thee. Render us spiritually-minded by the constant indwelling of thy Holy Spirit in our hearts. Fix our affections on things above ; and even in the engagements of the present life, enable us to be fervent in spirit, serving thee. May we be contented with the station and the circumstances allotted us by thy providence in the present world ; and under all the afflictions of life, may we be enabled to say, Father, thy will be done ! Make us, we beseech thee, after the example of our blessed Savior, meek and lowly in heart ; and may we display in some degree the gentleness of Christ ! Call forth in our hearts a kind and merciful disposition towards our fellow-men. In all our dealings with them, may we manifest simplicity and godly sincerity, and prove ourselves to be Christians indeed, in whom is no guile. Hear us, holy Father, for the Redeemer's sake ! Amen.

SERMON L.

CHRISTIAN PRACTICE.

Titus ii. 11, 12. For the grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men ; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

THE disease of our nature, our dislike of that which is good, and our love of that which is evil, has been observed and lamented by wise men in all ages. The fact could not be denied. The difficulty was, where to find a cure. Many attempts were tried, but all in vain, till Jesus Christ the great physician appeared. The Gospel alone affords a certain and universal remedy for the fatal distemper of the soul ; and this is the substance of our text.

St. Paul is here directing Titus, who was a minister of the Gospel, how to dis-

charge his duty, so as to be useful to all sorts of people, because the Gospel was sent to all sorts of people. He was to teach and exhort both young and old, parents and children, masters and servants : it being the design of the Gospel to bring a present salvation from sin, as well as a future deliverance from hell, and to teach all sorts of men to deny all doctrines and practices which are ungodly ; and all worldly lusts of sensuality ; and that we should live soberly with respect to ourselves ; righteously and honestly with respect to our neighbor ; and in a holy manner with respect to God. This will appear more plainly, by considering the several parts of the text distinctly, and in the following order :

1. The Gospel of Christ is the grace or gift of God.

2. It bringeth salvation.

3. It hath appeared to all men.

4. It teaches us to live a holy life.

1. The Gospel is the grace of God. The word *Grace* signifies, in general, the favor of God, either in his *good will* towards us, or in his *good gifts* to us. Here it means one of his good gifts to us, namely, the Gospel : and the Gospel may well be called his grace, for it is the Gift of his grace ; it is the Revelation of his grace ; and, it is the Instrument of his grace.

The Gospel is called the grace of God, because it is the *Gift* of his grace ; it is a matter of pure favor that we have the Gospel ; it ought to be thought a very great blessing indeed, and to be esteemed above all earthly blessings. It is a mercy to have health, it is a mercy to have bread, but it is a much greater mercy to have the Gospel. Blessed is the people who know the joyful sound.

The Gospel is also called the grace of God, because it is the *Revelation* of his grace and good will to poor sinners. We could never have known whether God would be gracious to sinners, or not, without the Gospel. We could never have known that salvation is by grace. All mankind naturally seek it by their own works, and not by grace. But the very design of the Gospel is to declare the grace of God ; to let us know the love of God to man, which he has proved in the gift of his Son, and in his readiness to pardon sin for the sake of his Son. Sinners had more reason to expect a revelation of his wrath, than of his mercy, for all have sinned, and the “ wages of sin is death. ” As soon as our first parents had sinned, and heard the voice of the Lord God in the garden, they were afraid, and ran to hide themselves,

for they expected to hear nothing but the sentence of death. But they were mistaken, for God was pleased to give them a promise of his Son. In all ages he gave some hints of his intended mercy, but never so plainly as by the Gospel, or good news of salvation by grace. We must take care to distinguish the Gospel from the law. The law of the ten commandments requires perfect love and perfect obedience, and it curses to hell every man who breaks it but once. Ignorant people expect little from the Bible but to teach them their duty, and how to be good, and so to get to heaven by their obedience; to be sure, the Bible does teach us our duty, and it would be well if people learned and did it better; but the first design of the Bible is to reveal Christ as a Savior; the design of the law is not only to teach us our duty, but to convince us we have not done it; to show us our sin and our danger, and to oblige us to fly to Christ, that we may be saved by grace.

Again—the Gospel is called the grace of God, because it is the *Instrument* of his grace; it is what he sends by his ministers, and blesses by his Spirit, “to open men’s eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” Nothing but the truth of God will do this. All the finest preaching in the world about virtue and morality, will do no good as to the conversion or salvation of a sinner. It often makes men proud of themselves, keeps them ignorant of Christ, and makes them “go about to establish their own righteousness;” which is “to frustrate the grace of God,” and is as much as to say that “Christ died in vain.” But the Gospel is the sword of the Spirit, the rod of his strength, and the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth. You see, therefore, with what good reason the Gospel is called the grace of God. We are now to show that,

II. The Gospel bringeth salvation.

The grand subject of this Gospel is salvation. It supposes the guilt and danger of man as a sinner. It declares what Christ has done and suffered for our deliverance. It declares God’s readiness to forgive all manner of sin and blasphemy, if we come to him by Jesus Christ. In short, it is to restore man from all the effects of his fall. Is he far gone from God? it is to bring him back. Is he fallen? it is to raise him up. Is he condemned on account of sin? it is to justify him from all things. Is he an enemy of God? it is to make him a friend. Is he a slave of Satan? it is to

make him a free man. Thus it bringeth salvation.

It brings it to the *Ear*. The trumpet of the Gospel sounds with an inviting voice, it is a joyful sound. No music was ever so sweet, as the sound of mercy to a convinced sinner. And faith cometh by hearing. It is the will of God that this sound should go out into all the earth, and that the Gospel should be preached to every creature. “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

It brings it to the *Mind*, or understanding. All God’s children are taught of God, and every one that is taught of God cometh to Christ. Many people plead their ignorance, and think they shall be excused on account of it; but the Gospel is sent on purpose to enlighten the ignorant; and it will be our own fault, and our ruin, if we remain in the dark; it can only be because we love darkness rather than light. The Gospel is a glorious light, and when it is attended with the power of the Spirit, it chases away all the natural darkness of our minds, and makes us clearly see the wonderful plan of salvation by grace.

It brings it to the *Heart*. It comes with power and life. It is not entertained with a cold and formal assent, as a matter of small concern, but cordially welcomed as the messenger of life. It is said of Lydia, in the Acts of the Apostles, that “the Lord opened her heart, so that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul.” He does the same for all real Christians. They receive the word with joy. They approve of it heartily. It brings peace to their troubled consciences, and it brings love to God and man into their hearts.

It brings it to the *Life*. It is designed to regulate the conduct, and to make the believer holy in all manner of conversation and godliness. But this will appear more plainly hereafter.

III. The Gospel of salvation hath appeared to *all men*.

To *all nations* of men; it was not confined to the Jews, as they thought it would be. Jesus Christ ordered it to be preached to all nations, to all the world, to every creature. Accordingly, on the day of Pentecost, the apostles preached it in a great variety of languages to people of various countries, and afterwards they, and many other preachers, went into all the countries then known.

To *all sorts* of men. This is the chief design of the words. In human society here must be various ranks and orders of men, and they must be distinguished by

different names; but the Gospel knows no distinctions; it is equally sent to high and low, rich and poor, bond and free, male and female, for "Christ is all in all." Col. iii. 11. Let none, therefore, think they may be excused from regarding it. Many of the rich think the Gospel is well enough for the poor, but they are too wise to need it. Many of the poor, on their part, think religion rather belongs to the rich; but they are so ignorant, and have so much to mind for the body, that they think they may be excused. But you see, this salvation is sent to all men; and "how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" But again, this Gospel is sent,

To sinners of every degree; great sinners, or little sinners, if it be proper to call any so. Jesus Christ came to call, not the righteous, but sinners, to repentance; and none but those who feel themselves to be sinners will regard his call. Such persons heard him gladly on earth, while the proud pharisees, who thought themselves good, despised him, and abused him, as the friend of publicans and sinners. Blessed be God that sinners, however great, are not excluded from the hope of the Gospel. Christ commanded it to be first preached at Jerusalem, among his murderers: where, probably, many of them were converted; and to this very day, "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."

Let it also be observed, that our text says the Gospel *bringeth* salvation; not, it *shall* bring it hereafter, but it *bringeth* it *now*. It brings it near at this moment; "the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thine heart." Many people dreadfully mistake the matter, who look only for a salvation hereafter; they do not think of being saved till they die; but salvation is a present business; and if we are not saved before we die, we shall never be saved at all. We must now be enlightened, convinced, believe in Christ, pass from death unto life, and thus be made new creatures, or we can never enter into the kingdom of heaven. O that this Gospel may *now* bring into our hearts a present salvation! We proceed to the last and principal thing in our text.

IV. The Gospel which *bringeth* salvation, teacheth us to live a holy life—it *teacheth us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world*; that is, it teacheth us—What a holy life is, The necessity of living such a life—and, How we may attain it.

1. The Gospel which *bringeth* salvation,

teacheth us what a holy life is—the true nature, and full extent of it. We have no other sufficient rule. The world affords nothing but imperfect examples, and our own deceitful hearts would often curtail the perfect rule. This is our teacher. Let us ever hear and read it with this view. Let it be a light to our feet, and a lamp to our paths.

This holy guide directs us, in the first place, *to deny ungodliness*,—to renounce, abhor, and forsake all infidelity, idolatry, and impiety of every kind; every thing contrary to the first four commandments. If the devil, or wicked men, or our own wicked hearts, would tempt us to neglect the worship of God, or to take his name in vain, or to break the Sabbath, we must deny and refuse to do it. We must also *deny worldly lusts*, all irregular inclinations and desires, forbidden by the last six commandments. These are *worldly* lusts; such as the men of the world gratify, and place their happiness in. These will often ask for indulgence. They will plead very strongly that they are natural, that there is no harm in them, and that all the world indulges them, but they are "worldly lusts," and must be denied, unless we are willing to be damned with the world; for the "end of these things is death." These are the things that chain men to the world and to a life of sense, make us like the brutes, cause us to forget God, to neglect the salvation of our souls; and "for these things' sake, cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." This ungodliness, and these worldly lusts, must, therefore, be denied; and this is that *Self-denial* which our Lord insists upon, and without which we cannot be his disciples.

But this is not all. We are taught by the Gospel how to live. We are to live—*soberly, righteously and godly*; these three words tell us our duty as to *ourselves*, our *neighbor*, and our *God*.

To live *soberly*, is not only to abstain from drunkenness, which is a damnable sin, but from all excess in eating, drinking, and other bodily indulgences. It is to be sober and moderate in our passions, our recreations, our speech, our dress, and whole behavior; it is to be temperate and moderate in all lawful things, using the world as not abusing it; using it as pilgrims and strangers; not making it our rest or portion; but making all worldly comforts secondary things, subservient to the interests of our souls, and the glory of our God. This is to live *soberly*.

We are also to live *righteously*, that is,

in respect of our neighbor; to give every one his due; to honor all men; and do the duty of our stations, whether to our superiors, inferiors, or equals. The New Testament is full of excellent directions as to relative duties. The apostles largely teach us the duties of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters, servants and subjects. A true Christian will study his Bible with this view; and, in every relation of life, he will endeavor to conform himself to it; and he that pretends to religion without this, is a mere hypocrite. This is too little regarded by many professors of religion, as beneath their notice; they would even deter ministers from enforcing the relative duties, by calling it "legal stuff, working for life, and arminianism;" but these people know not what they say, and how much they disgrace the Gospel of Christ, which our text declares is intended to teach us these things. It was a weighty saying of Mr. Whitefield, that "To be *really* holy, is to be *relative-ly* holy." All sincere believers think so, and act accordingly.

But the Gospel also requires us to live *godly*. Many ignorant people think that if they live *soberly* and *righteously* it is enough. How many do we hear excusing themselves from all regard to Gospel-religion, by pleading that they are sober and honest. And will these people call themselves *Christians*? Moral heathens they may be. We deny they are Christians; for the Christian has a constant regard to God in Christ; he knows him, he believes in him, he fears him, he loves him, he prays to him, he converses with him, he lives to him. O the miserable blindness of many in this land of light! How many, on a dying bed, build all their hopes on their honesty, and having done no harm; while they have lived all their days in neglect of the salvation of Christ, neglect of his Sabbath and worship, buried alive in the cares of the world; sensual, worldly, covetous; perhaps opposers of the Gospel, and persecutors of the faithful. The Lord in his infinite mercy open the eyes of such mistaken persons, and preserve them from going out of the world with a lie in their right hand!

To live *godly* includes a great deal. We must know God, by the teaching of his Spirit. We must believe on him as a God reconciled in Christ. We must love him as our heavenly Father. We shall then love his law, and gladly be governed by his commandments. His word will be precious to us. His sabbath delightful. His worship pleasant. His ordinances

sweet. In a word, we shall "walk humbly with our God;" it will be our meat and drink to do his will; and being no longer our own, but bought with a price, we shall glorify God in our bodies, and in our spirits, which are his.

This is that kind of life which the Gospel teaches us. This is its nature and extent. The Gospel also shows us the absolute *necessity* of it. Many deceive themselves with vain words, and think there is no occasion to be so strict; and they labor to render a life of holiness contemptible, by calling it ill names, such as fanaticism and enthusiasm, and by ridiculing serious persons as enthusiasts, hypocrites, and righteous over-much. But we abide by the Bible. We abide by our text. The God of truth has prescribed this as the way of life; and has awfully declared, that without repentance, without faith, without holiness and godliness, no man shall see the Lord. By this we are determined to abide, and let others look to themselves.

But should any say, All this is very right and good, but who can come up to it? By what means can we attain it? I answer, The Gospel that bringeth salvation teacheth us how to attain it, and this is the peculiar excellency of the Gospel. The teachers of mere morality are like the task-masters of Pharaoh, who required the Israelites to make brick without straw. They are always preaching that men should do this and that, but they tell them not their own inability, nor where their great strength lies. When we view a natural man wedded to the world, or tied and bound with the chains of his sin, or wallowing in the mire of sensual lusts, we are ready to say, Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? But nothing is too hard for the Lord. The Gospel first directs the sinner to repair by faith to Christ, and to obtain the pardon of his sins through his precious blood. This is his first business. And if the sinner be enabled to believe in Jesus, his faith will work by love, will purify his heart, and overcome his lust. We are not by our own power, first to reform our lives, and then, as gracious and good people, to trust in Christ for salvation; but, as soon as ever we discover our need of a Savior, to fly to him without delay, just as we are. And he casts out none that come to him. Believing in him will give a new turn to our affections. We shall mourn for pardoned sin. We shall hate the murderers of our Lord. We shall be crucified to the world by the cross of Jesus; and the ways of godliness will no longer be a burden

and a task, but our pleasant and easy service. The love of Christ will constrain us, and we shall judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that henceforth they who live should not live to themselves, but unto him who died for them.

Besides, Whoever believes in Jesus is really united to him, in the same manner as the vine and its branches are united. All our fruitfulness in good works depends on this union. "Abide in me," said our Lord; "thus shall ye bring forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing." This is the true secret of godliness, the Gospel mystery of sanctification, and the only way of becoming holy. In this way nothing is too hard to be accomplished; and on this ground every believer may say, with St. Paul, "I can do all things, through Christ which strengtheneth me." We shall now conclude with some *Inferences* and *Exhortations*.

1. Is the Gospel the Grace of God? The Gift of his grace? The Revelation of his grace? And the Instrument of his grace? Then take care to distinguish the Gospel from all false doctrine. Beware of "another Gospel." Whatever does not bring to helpless sinners the good news of a free grace salvation is not the Gospel. Reject it. And O take care that "you receive not the grace of God in vain." 2 Cor. vi. 1. The grace of God, as a divine principle in the heart, cannot be received in vain, but the Gospel, which is also called the grace of God, is often received in vain. It is a great privilege to have the Gospel preached to us, but a dreadful thing to have it prove "the savor of death unto death;" for, Christ has said it, "He that believeth not shall be damned." Mark xvi. 16.

Is the Gospel the grace of God? Prize it yourselves, and recommend it to others. Next to Christ himself, it is the greatest gift of God to a ruined world. What an inexpressible privilege and honor is it, to be in any way instrumental in communicating this heavenly gift to others! Let us invite our neighbors to hear it. Let us put some Gospel tracts into their hands. Let us speak of it to our relations and friends. Let us support and countenance the preaching of it at home and abroad; and, especially, let us recommend it to others by the holy effects it has produced on ourselves. Let us recommend it by our lives.

It appears from what has been said that there is no ground for the reproach often cast on the Gospel of grace, that it leads

to licentiousness, or that the doctrine of faith and grace is hurtful to morality and good works. It is a foul and groundless slander. Nothing is more false. Our text confutes it at once. We have shown that the Gospel is properly called the grace of God; it is the Gospel that bringeth salvation by grace; and this free-grace Gospel teacheth us to live a holy life. What can be plainer? And let it be noted, that nothing but the Gospel of grace can truly teach or produce a holy life. This was, at first, the power of God to the salvation of bigoted Jews, and beastly Heathens. In every succeeding age it has had the same blessed effects. And it is the same to this day. While moral preachers labor in vain, and many of them address their Heathen lectures to sleepy hearers and empty pews, we know and are sure, that the plain truths of the Gospel are effectual to quicken dead sinners, to convert notorious rebels, and to produce in numberless persons "the fruits of good living." This is its proper tendency; these its genuine fruits. And we adore that grace that renders the word powerful for these blessed purposes.

If any false professors of religion abuse the doctrines of grace for licentious practices, they have no countenance in so doing from the Gospel or the preachers of it. Our text will at once confront and confound such base hypocrites. It teaches them the nature, necessity, and method of attaining a holy life. Believers were "chosen in Christ, that they might be holy and without blame before him in love." All the commands of God, both in the Old and New Testament, require it. It was an eminent branch of the design of Christ in dying for his people. It is necessary to the present peace and happiness of our souls in this world of sin and vanity. This is the way in which God expects us to glorify him among men. And in this consists our "meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light."

May our holy God, who has favored us with his holy Gospel, render it effectual by his Holy Spirit, to make us "holy in all conversation and godliness;" and, at the great day, "present us holy, and unblamable, and unreprouvable in his sight." To him be glory, now and for ever. Amen.

PRAYER.—FATHER of mercies and God of all grace, we give thee humble and hearty thanks for the glorious Gospel of thy grace. We rejoice that it bringeth salvation to the ear, to the understanding, and to the heart! We bless thee that it is designed for sinners of all nations and of every degree! We bless thee for the holiness it exhibits and requires! May it, by thy

grace, effectually teach and constrain us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world! May we, by moderation in all lawful pursuits and enjoyments, so use the things of this world as not to abuse them! May we, by faith in the Redeemer, be clothed with his spotless righteousness, and be rendered holy in all manner of conversation and godliness! Enable us to live near to Christ, and to experience the blessedness of constantly abiding in him. From him may we derive all our qualifications for obedience, and all our joys and consolations; and, at the last great day, may we be presented holy, unblamable, and unrepvable in thy sight. In the Savior's name we implore these great mercies; and to him, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be everlasting praise! Amen.

SERMON LI.

NONCONFORMITY TO THE WORLD.*

Romans xii. 2. And be not conformed to this world.

THIS is a general exhortation, adapted to a great variety of occasions. It affords an excellent rule for the Christian's conduct, which he may readily apply, when tempted to follow the course of this world. It is easy to know what the world loves and pursues, and it is easy to remember that the Christian must take a different course. The way of the world is the broad way to destruction; the way of life is narrow, and trodden but by few.

The text is a plain and direct prohibition against conformity to the world. It is addressed to the people of God, and stands connected with an affectionate exhortation to be devoted to him. This chapter is wholly practical; and follows a large and excellent discourse upon the exceeding riches of divine grace to sinners, in their free and full justification through faith in Christ Jesus, and the most noble and glorious privileges to which they are called. "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Thus are the doctrines of grace sweetly connected with a gracious walk and conversation. They are connected in the Bible, and they are connected in all those who are taught of God. May we happily know their sacred union by our own experience!

* As this sermon is designed to expose the sin and danger of *Carnal Games and Amusements*, especially in the professors of Religion, it may be usefully read in *Holiday seasons*; at the time of a *Fair or Wakes*; or when *Theatrical amusements* are introduced into a town. It may also be lent to a friend, who is in danger of being tempted to sinful compliance upon such occasions.

In order to this complete devotedness to God, the apostle here advises believers "not to be *conformed* to this world"—not to be moulded into the same fashion—not to comply with their temper and spirit—not to imitate their depraved customs and manners; but on the contrary, to "be transformed, by the renewing of their minds;" to be changed into a contrary, better, more glorious, and abiding form—in the daily renovation of their souls, yet more and more by the Holy Spirit. The text, therefore, teaches us this great and useful doctrine, that,

CHRISTIANS must not be conformed to this world.

By "the world," we are certainly to understand, the men of the world, in opposition to true believers, or the people of God. That there is a real and essential distinction between the world and the Church, is abundantly plain from the Scriptures. Jesus Christ saith of his disciples, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world;" and St. John saith of believers, "We know we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." This important distinction prevails throughout the Bible. Everywhere, God's people are represented as differing from the world. Believers are called children of God; others, the children of the Devil and the children of wrath; the one are friends, the other enemies; the one far from God, the other are brought nigh to God.

It was the design of Christ, in dying for his people, "to deliver them from this present evil world"—to save them "from the evil that is in the world"—to make an evident separation, and "to purify unto himself a *peculiar people*, zealous of good works;" that is, to separate them from the wicked world for his own use, and for his own glory, as his precious and peculiar property, that they might be zealously affected towards him and his cause, in the performance of every good work.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ calls believers to this separation, and is the instrument of effecting it. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate," saith the Lord, "and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you." 2 Cor. vi. 17. There is much danger in the company of idolaters, and in connexion with unbelievers; there is danger of being infected and defiled; therefore a proper distance must be kept. And the Gospel of Christ becomes an occasion of this separation; it creates division, it causes disunion; the believer is crucified to the world, and the world unto him. Thus faith, which is the bond of

union with Christ, is the instrument of separation from the world. And how reasonable is it to expect, that persons, whose state and character now differ essentially from others, and who will be eternally separated as far as Heaven is from Hell, should now bear the visible marks of distinction, and not be conformed to this world!

We may proceed to inquire in what this nonconformity consists, or in what degree it is required; for a *total* separation is impossible, in the present state of things. There are family connexions, which are not to be dissolved, because some of the parties are gracious, and others remain in their sins, 1 Cor. vii. 10. There are also civil connexions, in the lawful affairs of this world, with which religion cannot interfere. If we would wholly avoid intercourse with the wicked, "we must needs go out of the world," for the world is full of them, 1 Cor. v. 10. Neither does religion require or countenance a morose and sullen, or uncivil behavior to the men of the world; much less does it demand an entire exclusion from the affairs of life, and a solitary confinement in a monastery or nunnery. Christians are not, like the old Pharisees, to say to others—"Stand off—we are holier than thou." On the contrary, believers are "the salt of the earth," and, by their necessary and lawful connexions with the world, are the happy means of preserving it from utter corruption; they are "the lights of the world," and diffuse some general rays of knowledge amidst the general darkness. And by their wise, holy, and prudent conduct among men, are to condemn the world, as to what is evil in it, and recommend the Gospel they profess to the notice and approbation of others. But while they are thus engaged, they are not to be conformed to the world, in the following respects.

1. *As to the Errors of the world*—their falls and dangerous sentiments in religion. The doctrines of the Gospel are directly contrary to the generally received opinions of worldly men: they directly tend to humble the sinner, to exalt the Savior, and to promote holiness; while the notions of the world tend to make the sinner proud, with some fancied opinion of his goodness, works, and righteousness; to diminish the glory of Jesus Christ, as "the Lord our Righteousness;" and to make holiness in heart and life a needless, if not a contemptible thing. It is the high privilege of God's people to be "taught of God;" to "have the Spirit of truth,"

whom the world cannot receive;" to "know the truth," to "be of the truth," to "keep the truth," and to be "sanctified by the truth." False teachers "are of the world, therefore they speak of the world, and the world heareth them;" but he that is of God, and knoweth God, heartily embraces the truth of the Gospel; he "heareth the voice of Christ, the true Shepherd, but the voice of a stranger he will not follow." 1 John iv. 5, 6. John x. 16, 26, 27. This separation from the religious errors of the world is of the greatest importance; and while we pay all civil respects to all men, and abhor persecution, we must give no countenance to error. St. John gives us this direction—"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine (the doctrine of Christ), receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds." 2 John 10, 11.

2. *We must not be conformed to the world in its sinful Practices.* "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," are called "the world's trinity," their god whom they worship and obey. The works of the flesh, and the fruits of the Spirit, are directly contrary to each other; they who are in the flesh practise the one, they that are in the Spirit practise the other. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, as adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, wrath, strife, seditions, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; the doers of which shall not inherit the kingdom of God," Gal. v. 19—21. But "if we walk in the Spirit, we shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh: and they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts." The Christian must therefore dissent from the world in its evil practices; even "the appearance of evil" must be carefully shunned. Pure religion and undefiled is to keep himself unspotted from the world—to behave himself in such a circumspect and holy manner, as to keep clear of the pollutions of this evil and ensnaring world, that he may not bring a slur upon his conscience or his character.

3. *Christians must not be conformed to the Spirit of the world.* There is a certain disposition and taste which forms the true character of a man of the world, and which operates as a powerful principle in the regulation of his whole conduct. There is also an opposite principle given to the people of God in their new birth, which gives a new taste to their minds,

and a new bias to their affections. St. Paul, speaking of both these, saith, "now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God." 1 Cor. ii. 12. The spirit of the world must of course be a worldly spirit; or, in the language of Scripture, a "carnal mind!" it can be no other; for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh." So God himself declared of man, before the flood—"My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is *flesh*—wholly fleshly and carnal"—"sensual, not having the Spirit." The desires, the pursuits, the delights of natural men are only worldly. Their cry is, "Who will show us any good?"—"What shall we eat, what shall we drink, wherewithal shall we be clothed?" The world, in some form or other, is their beloved object. But the people of God, "redeemed from their vain conversation," have a nobler object in view.—They are *spiritual* in their taste and pursuits: they can no longer grovel in the dust, or feed on husks: they are renewed in the spirit of their minds, and seek the things that are above. How poor, and mean, and low, are the sordid objects of the world in their esteem! even the wisest and greatest among natural men are amusing themselves with toys of children, the baubles of idiots, or the pranks of madmen, compared with the manly, solid, heavenly aims and employments of true believers.

4. *The Christian must not be conformed to the company of the world.* The men of the world are not his chosen companions. We have already observed that converse with them cannot be wholly avoided. The lawful business of life will necessarily bring them together. But we speak of making them intimate friends, and the companions of leisure hours. But "how can two walk together, except they be agreed?" What fellowship hath light with darkness? What concord hath Christ with Belial, or Christians with the sons of Belial? Either must the Christian conform himself to the light, vain, frothy and often profane conversation of worldly men, or they must conform themselves to his spiritual views; and which of these is most likely to happen, it is not hard to tell. We become insensible like our intimate friends, and naturally drink into their spirit: as therefore there is, in general, but little probability of doing good to carnal men by our company, it is far wisest and safest for us to keep our distance. Intimate and habitual friendship with wicked men is considered, in the

Scripture, as opposition to God. St. James, addressing himself to conforming professors, saith, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God."—If our chief happiness be in the things of the world, and if we court the friendship of wicked men in order to procure them, we are, at heart, enemies to God; and in persons of a religious character, who profess to be betrothed unto Christ as their spiritual husband, this is heart-adultery.

And if this occasional conformity to worldly persons be so blamable, what must we think of forming connexions with them for life? How criminal and how dangerous, to act directly contrary to the grand rule in this case—to marry—"only in the Lord." 1 Cor. vii. 39.

5. *Christians must not conform themselves to the world in their carnal amusements.* The taste of men discovers itself in nothing more plainly than in their choice of amusements. It is easy to know what these are, and what is adapted to the corrupt taste of the carnal mind. Worldly men are never so much in their element as when engaged in them; and, to enjoy them, they will often sacrifice their most important interests. Among these the amusements of the theatre have the first place; for these the world strongly pleads, and affects to place them on a level with divine ordinances, by saying, They can learn as much from a good play as from a sermon. But it should be remembered that sermons, and means of grace, derive all their virtue from the authority of Christ who appointed them, and has promised to bless them; but the advocates of plays can never pretend that Christ has either ordained them, or engaged to put his blessing upon them.

So far are plays from being useful to the cause of virtue, that they are one of the most successful engines of vice that Satan ever invented. Several of the heathen philosophers and law-givers opposed them in the strongest terms. Plato banishes them from his commonwealth. Xenophon commends the Persians for not suffering their youth to hear any thing amorous, thinking it dangerous to add any weight to the bias of nature. Seneca complains, that by the stage, vice made an insensible approach, and stole on the people in the disguise of pleasure. Tacitus says, the German ladies preserved their honor, by having no play-houses among them. The Athenians would not suffer a

judge to compose a comedy. The Lacedæmonians would not endure the stage, under any kind of regulation. The Romans, in their better times, reckoned the stage so disgraceful, that any Roman turning actor was degraded. And we may add, that the English laws, till very lately, denominated stage-players—rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars.

The earliest Christians abhorred them. Tertullian, in the second century, says, "We (Christians) have nothing to do with the frenzies of the race-ground, the lewdness of the play-house, or the barbarities of the bear-garden." Some of the ancient councils ordained that players should be excommunicated, and that even the sons of clergymen must not be present at plays, "it being always unlawful for Christians to come among blasphemers." A good writer says—"Will you not avoid the seat of infection? The very air suffers by their impurities, and they breathe the plague. What though the performance be entertaining; what though innocence and virtue shine in some parts of it; it is not the custom to prepare poison unpalatably. No; to make the mischief spread, they must oblige the sense, and make the dose pleasant. Thus the devil throws in a cordial drop to make the draught go down, and steals some ingredients from the dispensatory of heaven. Look upon all their fine sentences, their flights of rhetoric, and their loftiness of style—as honey dropping from the bowels of a toad, or the bag of a spider." "And, admitting," says another, "that some good may be learned at the play-house—do people use to send their daughters to a bawdy-house to learn discipline? Do gentlemen educate their sons under highwaymen to teach them courage? Or will any man venture on board a leaky vessel, that he may learn the art of shifting in a storm?" Besides, if plays have such a moral tendency, how is it that the players are generally the most immoral people in the world, and the neighborhood of play-houses the very sink of filthiness?"

Archbishop Tillotson thought plays "a mighty reproach to Britain, and not fit to be tolerated in a civilized, much less in a Christian nation." He calls the play-house "the devil's chapel, the school and nursery of vice and lewdness." And one of the judges well said—"One play-house ruins more souls than fifty churches can save."

Dancing.—The dancing of both sexes, and especially in public places, is another species of amusement highly pleasing to the world, but extremely dangerous to good

morals. The gaiety it inspires; the company into which it leads, and various evils connected with it, render it every way unbecoming the Christian; who has the utmost need to cultivate seriousness and gravity, and to live and act as a pilgrim and a stranger. - There is scarcely any thing not absolutely and notoriously wicked, in which conformity to the world consists more than the amusement of the ball-room. Not a few have been called out of it into eternity; but where is the person who would wish, when summoned to the bar of God, to be found so employed?

Playing at Cards is another favorite diversion with the world. The express purpose of this amusement is a sufficient argument against it—it is *to kill time*. Alas! our time is short enough, and will die of itself; we need not hasten its exit. Our days are as an handbreadth, and our age is as nothing. We complain of the shortness of life, and yet labor to reduce its narrow span. It may justly be doubted whether any game be lawful which depends upon casting a lot; for dealing the cards is of that nature, and is therefore a kind of appeal to God for the success of our play, for "the lot is cast into the lap, but the disposal thereof is of the Lord." But, not to insist upon this, it is really a childish business. It is a poor employment for rational and immortal beings to spend many hours of precious time in throwing about bits of spotted paper. The conversation that accompanies it, is generally frivolous and foolish. The passions of avarice and anger are frequently excited, and the tragical consequences of gaming are so perfectly opposite to the Christian character, that a good man ought to reject the amusement altogether.

There are other diversions, as horse-racing, cock-fighting, bull-baiting, &c. as well as conformity to the world in gay, indecent, or too expensive fashions of dress, upon which we have not room to comment particularly. There is one grand rule applicable to them all, and which may afford a pretty good test of their propriety or impropriety. You will find this apostolic direction in Col. iii. 17. "Whatsoever ye do in *word* or *deed*—do all *in the name of the Lord Jesus*, giving thanks to God and the Father, by him." Now, can you tell me how to see a play, to dance a minuet, or to play a game at cards—"in the name of the Lord Jesus, and to the glory of God?" Can you pray for the Lord's presence and blessing on these engagements? A good man once convinced a company of the folly of these things by offering to say grace

before cards, or to pray for a blessing on them. The company felt the impropriety, and asked him what he was going to do! The good man replied—"God forbid I should do any thing on which I cannot ask his blessing." Common sense forbids you to say—"Lord, go with me to the playhouse, and bless the good instruction I go to receive!" or, "Lord, give me a good hand at cards!" Such petitions would be justly reckoned impious; but the impropriety clearly shows, that what cannot be done with prayer, cannot be done with a good conscience, cannot be done to the glory of God, and therefore ought not to be done at all. In all these things the consistent Christian must remember the text—"Be not conformed to this world."

APPLICATION.

FROM what has been said, it is surely evident, that it is the duty of Christians not to be conformed to this world. It is plain that God's people are a distinct people, and ought to be a separate people. There is a holy singularity, though not an affected singularity, which well becomes them. This indeed requires courage. In certain situations, where persons have been closely connected with the carnal and the gay, and especially with the great, it will not be very easy to come out from among them, and avow that they belong to Christ. Yet, let none despair. The Scripture shows us how it may be done, 1 John v. 4.—"Whosoever is *born of God*, overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our FAITH." By the new nature which the Christian receives, he gets above the terrors and allurements of the men and things of this world, so as not to be driven away by the one, or drawn aside by the other, from his duty to God. And this noble conquest is obtained, not by our own power, but by the strength we derive from Christ, through faith in him. Faith realizes eternal things, and shows us how vain and mean are the pursuits of the world. Faith also realizes the presence of God, and judges his approbation to be infinitely superior to the friendship of men.

Thus Moses, the man of God, triumphed over the world.—"When come to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season: esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt." Heb. xi. 24. It was *by faith* that Moses did this. Faith showed him the vanity and

danger of a court-life, of riches and grandeur, and sensual pleasure. Faith also showed him "the recompense of reward"—the glories of the eternal world, which we should continue to enjoy, when all human pomp is buried in the dust. He therefore wisely chose the better part, though attended with poverty and shame. With the crown of glory in view, he was willing to take up the cross, and even to glory in it. He determined to unite himself with God's people, and suffer reproach and affliction with them, rather than be conformed to this sinful and perishing world.

This subject shows the necessity of the new birth. If we would not be *conformed* to this world, it is necessary for us to be *transformed by the renewing of our mind*, as the apostle adds, immediately after our text. Be ye *transformed*—changed into a better form—from being "earthly, sensual, devilish," to become heavenly, spiritual, angelical; and this is done "by the renewing of our minds." The Holy Spirit begins this renewing work in regeneration; it is gradually carried on in sanctification; in dying, more and more, to sin and the world, until the blessed work be perfected in everlasting glory. Thus shall we "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." The will of God, as revealed in his word, for our direction in this particular, and in every other branch of duty, is *good*—good in itself, and good for us; conformity to it is *acceptable* and well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; and it is *perfect*—it is sufficient to make a finished Christian, "thoroughly furnished to every good work." O that divine grace may so transform our hearts, that we may prove, and prove by our own *experience* (for nothing else can teach it) how happy a thing it is to be wholly devoted to God, and to be governed in every respect by his sacred will!

PRAYER.—GREAT and glorious Jehovah, thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity without abhorrence. We adore thee for that forbearance which thou hast long manifested to a world lying in iniquity, and overspread with corruption. O deliver us, through the blessed Redeemer, from this present evil world! Deliver us from the condemnation of the ungodly world. Deliver us from the spirit and temper of the men of the world. Suffer us not to be conformed to the world in its errors, in its practices, or in its amusements. Give us, we beseech thee, that faith which overcomes the world. May we walk by that faith which realizes an unseen world, an unseen God, an unseen Savior! Conform us, O Lord, in heart and life to thy holy will. May we be transformed by the renewing of our mind, that we may prove what is thy good, acceptable, and perfect will. Take entire possession of our

hearts by thy Holy Spirit, and let no iniquity have dominion over us. Prepare us for that world of perfect holiness, into which nothing can enter that defileth. Hear, merciful God, these our petitions, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior! Amen.

SERMON LII.

PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

Matt. xxiv. 44. Therefore, be ye also ready.*

DEATH is a most serious thing! It is impossible to express, in words, what a most serious thing DEATH is! Those who have thought and said the most about it, in the time of their health, have found dying to be a far more serious matter than they could before conceive. "The living know that they must die;" and yet, how few lay it to heart! How few there are who "so number their days as to apply their hearts to wisdom!" In small country villages, where death seldom comes, the people scarcely think of it; and "their inward thought seems to be, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling-places to all generations;" and in large cities, where the bell tolls every day, and people constantly see coffins and funerals, the commonness of death takes away the solemnity of it. And in some places, it is shocking to reflect how little seriousness attends a funeral, and that by excessive eating, drinking, and unseasonable mirth, the house of mourning is turned into the house of feasting. All this shows that the heart of man is filled with criminal vanity, and how far it is from that constant seriousness which becomes mortals living on the borders of eternity. Yet, when death comes into our houses or our neighborhood, we should be particularly thoughtful. When it pleases God to remove a relation, a friend, or a neighbor, we should consider him as speaking to us—speaking the solemn language of the text, "Be ye also ready." It is as if he said—"Thoughtless mortals, remember your latter end. Consider this providence. Your fellow-creature is dead:—he speaks no more—he moves no more—he breathes no more: he has done with all the business, all the pleasures, all the relations of life: he is stripped of his former raiment, and wrapped in a shroud: he walks no more at

large, but is confined to the narrow limits of the coffin: he mixes in human society no more; he is now the companion of worms; he has forsaken all his former possessions, and retains nothing but a little spot of earth, with which he will shortly mingle, so as not to be distinguished from it. This is the end of man. This will shortly be your end. Prepare for it; prepare to die; prepare to meet your God." Such is the language of Providence. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear it.

The words of our text were spoken by Jesus Christ to his disciples, with respect to the destruction of Jerusalem, and also with respect to the end of the world. The destruction of Jerusalem was a "coming of the Son of Man," to execute terrible judgments on the unbelieving Jews. The Son of Man will also come to judge the world at the last day. But the particular time of the first event was kept secret; "the day and the hour was known to no man." The same may be said of the day of judgment. Our Savior uses this as an argument with his disciples to be *always ready*. "Watch, therefore," saith he, "for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." And this he enforces by two comparisons, taken from the common prudence of men. If any housekeeper was told, that some time or another in the night his house would be attacked by thieves, he would be sure to watch, at every hour, till the danger was over. And if a servant is ordered to set up for his master, but knows not whether he will come home at twelve o'clock, at two, or at three, he ought to be watching, that whenever he comes, he may be ready to open the door:—so, *Be ye also ready, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come*.

The hour of death is the hour of the Lord's coming to us. He comes to put a period to that life, which his power had constantly supported. He comes to separate the immortal spirit from the mortal body. He comes to call the soul to his tribunal, and fix its state in endless bliss or woe. And although his coming will not be visible, attended with angels in the clouds of heaven, as his last grand coming shall be, yet it is equally important and solemn in its consequences to each individual. Jesus has "the keys of death;" he has a right to close our lives when he pleases; and he has "the keys of the unseen world," to open the doors of heaven to his people, and to open the doors of hell to the wicked.

* This sermon may be peculiarly seasonable, when the providence of God hath removed a relation, a friend, or a neighbor.

But the time of his coming is a profound secret; "of that day and of that hour

knoweth no man." There is, indeed, "an appointed time to man upon the earth;" "his days are determined;" the number of his months are with God, who has fixed bounds which he cannot pass. But *where* the bounds are fixed, or how many the years, and months, and days—who can tell it? It is not fit for us to know. If wicked men knew certainly they should yet live many years, their hearts would be fully set in them to do evil; they would be more presumptuously wicked than they are. And if weakly and timorous people knew the time of their death, they would thereby be made unfit for any of the enjoyments or duties of life. It is therefore best as it is. Thus we are kept dependent on the God of our lives; and, if truly wise, we are kept always watchful; always desiring and endeavoring, according to our Savior's advice in the text—to *be ready*, which is the subject of the present discourse. We therefore observe, that

To be always ready for death, should be the first, the grand business of our lives.

No man, remaining in his natural state of sin, is, or can be, ready for death. "The wages of sin is death;" and he who dies, "in his sins," must receive the wages of them. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness;" "chased out of the world," forced away in anger, and against his will, like a malefactor to the dungeon, or a criminal to the gibbet. The natural man cleaves to the dust; his head and heart are full of worldly schemes, and projects of happiness; but death unexpectedly arrives, and stops him short. "In that very day his thoughts perish;" and "while he saith, peace and safety, sudden destruction cometh upon him, as travail upon a woman with child, and he cannot escape." He is perhaps saying to himself, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;" but God saith unto him, "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee."

It is unspeakably awful for a person to die in his sins; his guilt unpardoned; his heart unrenewed; under the power of that carnal mind which is enmity against God. "Guilt," says one, "is a bad companion in life, but how terrible will it be in death! It lies now, perhaps, like cold brimstone on their benumbed consciences; but when death opens the way for the sparks of divine vengeance to fall upon it, it will make dreadful flames in the conscience, in which the soul will be wrapt up for ever."

Vain are the hopes of ungodly men with respect to death. They do not like to think of dying; but when they do, they flatter

themselves in their iniquity, and hope they shall do very well at last; they think they have good hearts, or that their good deeds will make amends for their bad ones; or that they shall have time to repent, and make their peace with God, receive the sacrament, and get the priest's passport to heaven. O vain, delusive hopes! Such men generally die as they live; and "what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?" These foolish hopes, not being founded on the word of God, are like a house built upon the sand; and when the rain shall descend, the floods come, and the winds blow, and beat upon the house, down it must fall, and great will be the fall of it.

Only "the pure in heart shall see God." How can the profane man, who blasphemes his Maker every day, and with almost every breath calls for damnation, expect to meet God with safety? How can the unclean, the whoremonger, the adulterer, or the lascivious, expect to be admitted into the presence of a pure and holy God? How can the Sabbath-breaker imagine he shall be permitted to keep perpetual Sabbath in heaven, who could not endure the work of a short Sabbath once a week on earth? Shall the wilfully ignorant dream of a share in the inheritance of the saints in light?—the dishonest man think to rank with the righteous?—the self-righteous person, with those who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb? Alas! all such hopes will be disappointed—"their hope shall be cut off, and their trust shall be as the spider's web."

What then is it to be ready for death? In what does a real preparation for it consist?

1. The foundation of the whole is *an interest in Christ*. "Blessed are the dead who die *in the Lord*." Sin and death come by Adam; righteousness and life come by Christ. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death hath passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."—"Through the offence of one many are dead; yea, by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation." Now, as our being *in Adam* is the cause of death, being *in Christ* is the cause of life. Our union with the first man has subjected us to sin, misery, death, and hell; union with the second can alone afford us righteousness, happiness, life, and glory. "I am," said Jesus, "the life.—I am come that they may have life; and he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die."

There is no security against the fatal consequences of death, but by believing in Jesus. The soul that is truly convinced of sin, that sees its danger, that is sensible of its helplessness, that is enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, will fly for refuge to him, will trust alone in his perfect righteousness; and in doing so is secure. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."—This, therefore, was the summit of St. Paul's wish—"that I may be found *in him*;" that is, as he explains it, not having on his own righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ, by faith, Phil. iii. 8. He saw that his own righteousness was insufficient. In the days of his ignorance he trusted to it: but, being taught of God, he discarded it; he despised it, as to the thought of appearing in it, or being justified by it. He now longs to be found in Christ; that is, in his righteousness:—to be found in it, as a safe refuge, in which the avenger of blood cannot reach him—to be found in it, as the wedding-garment, in which the master of the feast would accept him. There is no living happily, nor dying safely, but as we are in Christ, and some who have vainly trusted in their own works, in the secure hour of prosperity, have wisely thought better of it when they came to die, and confessed "it was safer to trust to the righteousness of Christ."

If we are united to Christ, and are interested in his righteousness, death cannot hurt us; it is like a serpent that has lost its sting. So the apostle beautifully speaks, 1 Cor. xv. 56. "The sting of death is *sin*, and the strength of sin is the *law*; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Death is compared to a venomous serpent, that pierces and poisons. Sin is the sting of this deadly serpent. It is sin that makes death so terrible to nature: were it not for sin, death would be of little consequence, considering what a vain and vexatious world this is. And the strength of sin is the *law*—that which gives such a formidable power to sin, whereby it subjects us to the death of the body, and to everlasting misery, is the holy and righteous law of God, armed with its fearful curse, and binding the sinner under the guilt of his sin, to the destruction of both body and soul. But, thanks be to God, Jesus Christ has taken away the sins of his people by the sacrifice of himself; redeemed us from the curse of the law, by becoming a curse for us; and thus he hath deprived death of its sting. "Death shot its sting into

our Savior's side; there left it; there lost it."

This is the true and only foundation of our preparation for death. It is sin that makes death terrible: but Christ hath taken away sin, and so taken away the sting of death. If, therefore, we believe in him, death cannot hurt us; for "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," the Gospel having freed them from the law of sin and death. "He that hath the Son hath life," "he shall never perish, but shall have everlasting life."

How much to be pitied are those poor ignorant creatures, who, in the prospect of death, comfort themselves with the thoughts of having done no harm: having paid every one his own; having been good livers; having kept church and sacrament; and having been good to the poor, and so on! All these are refuges of lies, and will leave the sinner exposed to the curse of the law, and to the sting of death. As no man can keep the law, no man can be saved by the law. Only Christ our Surety could keep the law perfectly; he did so; and, by so doing, has "brought in an everlasting righteousness, which is to and upon all who believe." Blessed then are they, and they only, who die in the Lord! *To be in Christ*, then, is the ground-work of our readiness for death; to have *Christ in us*, by his Spirit, sanctifying our nature, is equally necessary; and these blessings are always connected. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," for "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

2. We cannot be prepared for death, unless we are prepared for heaven: and no man is prepared for heaven but by the Holy Ghost. Our Lord has most solemnly declared, that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." Natural men think little of heaven; they have little other notion of it than that it is not hell. But if they had any just conception of that holy and happy state, their reason would convince them, that without an inward change they could never attain or enjoy it. Heaven would be a burthen to a graceless soul. As well might a swine that wallows in filthy mire, be delighted with the splendors of a palace; or a stupid ass be enchanted with the harmony of a concert, as a sensual carnal man be satisfied with the joys of the heavenly world. There must be a new heart, a new nature, and new affections, or there can be no relish for a better world. The more any thing, or person, on earth, is like hea-

ven, the more the sinner hates it; and the more resemblance it bears to hell, the more he loves it. His carnality of soul, his love of sensual pleasures, with all the wicked passions of his mind, are daily fitting him for another place, and another sort of company. He is treasuring up food for the worm that never dies, and fuel for the fire that shall never be quenched.

But, by regenerating grace, the believer is formed for glory. God has given a new bias to his affections. He sees the evil of sin, and sincerely hates it. He sees the beauty of holiness, and ardently desires it. He sees the excellency of the dear Redeemer, and cordially loves him. He delights in the law of the Lord, after the inward man. He loves the truth, the day, the ordinances, the people of God. He sees the vanity of the world, and is, in some degree weaned from it. He has a glimpse of the glory that shall be revealed, and longs to behold it; and in this experience he enjoys a foretaste of heaven. He is not altogether a stranger to the joys of that celestial place. "He who hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God;" and this experience is a blessed earnest of the future possession. The believer's title to heaven is in the righteousness of Christ alone; but his fitness for it is by these gracious operations of the Holy Spirit; and he who enjoys them, in the greatest degree, is the person best prepared for the great change.

In these blessed dispositions consists the believer's *habitual* readiness for death; but it is usual also to speak of his *actual* readiness. Our Lord has illustrated the difference between habitual and actual preparation, by the similes employed in the context. "A housekeeper is habitually ready for the thief, when he has taken all proper measures to secure his habitation, by doors and bars and bolts; but he is actually ready, when he stands armed to oppose his entrance. So the faithful servant is habitually ready to serve his master at any hour of the day, in any work to which he may be called: he is actually ready for his lord's return, when he keeps waking, with the light in his hand."

The believer is actually ready for death, when the graces of the Spirit in his soul are in their lively exercise. When faith is strong, triumphing over doubt and uncertainty; when hope is firm, subduing painful fears; when love to God, and Christ, and heavenly things, is ardent; when he is actually employed in performing the proper duties of his station, or

when calmly submitting to the afflicting hand of God; when he is guarding against excessive cares, or undue indulgence in the flesh; and especially when the thoughts of death become familiar and pleasant, and the views of glory bright and enchanting—then, with the world under his feet, heaven in his view, and Christ in his arms, he may say, with pious Simeon, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation!"

APPLICATION.

How important is readiness for death! Remember, death will come at its appointed hour, whether you are ready or not: and O how often at an unexpected hour! Not seldom death comes suddenly. How often do we hear of sudden deaths! How many go to bed well, and never rise more! or go out from home well, and never return!—Some are snatched away in the midst of their amusements, and others while engaged in their callings. How necessary then to be *always* ready, to be ready *now*. Delay in this case is dangerous indeed. Almost all men talk of preparing at some future time; when sickness shakes them over the grave, or when the Lord removes a relation or a neighbor, by some alarming stroke, they promise themselves they will repent or reform: but the impression soon dies away; the world, like the returning tide, fills their hearts with its cares and pleasures, and the writing on the sand is all erased—"So dies in human hearts the thoughts of death."

But, O consider the unspeakably dreadful consequence of dying unprepared. We can die but once; and if we die in our sins, we are lost, lost for ever! Once lost, lost for ever. There is no repentance in the grave, no pardon in the grave, no regeneration in the grave. *Now* then is the time; it may be the *only* time; certainly the best time.—It may be—Now or Never.

How happy is the life of that man who has "a good hope through grace;" "the full assurance of hope;" a solid scriptural persuasion of his interest in Christ. He truly enjoys life; and he may smile at death. He may say with St. Paul, "for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."—While I live here, Christ is with me: when I die, I shall be with Christ. How contented and cheerful may he be in the humblest lot, who knows that he is an heir of God, and a joint heir with Christ. O happy, happy, happy, man! Do not you wish to be like him?

But what is your present course? If you are living in sin, gratifying the lusts of the flesh, and departing from the living God, you cannot have this assurance. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; and he walks not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. If you are living in sin, you cannot be happy.—You know you are not. You try to be happy by forgetting death; but you cannot forget it. The tolling of the bell, the sight of a funeral, or the news of another's decease, will force the recollection of it, and it makes you miserable. You are like a man at a banquet, with a drawn sword hung over his head by a hair.—You cannot enjoy life for fear of death. O that you were wise! for religion is true wisdom. Forsake the foolish, and live. Let the wicked forsake his way, and turn unto the Lord: let him cry to God for the help of his Holy Spirit, without which no efforts of nature to get rid of sin will prove effectual; but with which the strongest corruptions may be subdued, and the sinner prepared for death and heaven.

Let Christians remember their Lord's advice—"Be ye also ready, for ye know not the hour when your Lord cometh." Remember, even the "wise virgins" slumbered and slept. Guard against this slothful temper. Cannot ye watch one hour? Be sober; be vigilant. The Judge is at the door. Be diligent, believer in Jesus, and, like your Master, "work while it is called to-day; the night cometh, in which no man can work." Many have, on a dying bed, repented of their negligence—none of their diligence. Now is the time for activity; there will be rest enough in the grave. And O, daily guard against every obstruction to actual readiness. Conform not to the world in its levities and vanities. Be much alone—be much with God. Make conscience of redeeming precious time, and employing all your talents for the glory of God, the welfare of your family, the church, and the world. In one word—die daily.

When God removes any one that is dear to us, what cordial consolation does it afford, if we have reason to believe he was ready for death! We must not sorrow as men without hope. The change is his great advantage. It would be selfish to wish him out of heaven, to reside again in this vale of tears. "We should scarcely dare to weep," said one, "if Christ had evidently taken the body along with the soul of our friend to heaven;" and why weep now? Absent from the body, he is present with the Lord; and

though the body must see corruption, it shall not always be the prisoner of the grave. Jesus has engaged to raise it up at the last day, and to fashion it like his own glorious body. O let us prepare to follow our pious friends, favored with an earlier call to glory; while we remain below, let us be active for God; and soon shall we join our kindred spirits before the throne, unite in the song of the redeemed, and "so be for ever with the Lord."

PRAYER.—ETERNAL and unchangeable Jehovah, so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. May we ever remember, that it is appointed unto man once to die; and that after death there is the judgment. May we not presume even on another day, not knowing what a day may bring forth. Suffer us not to neglect the great salvation, or to delay to a future season the grand concern of life. Prepare us, O Lord, for death, for judgment, and for eternity. Grant us, by faith, a personal interest in the Lord Jesus Christ. May we be justified freely by thy grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus! O may we now be accepted in the Beloved! and at the great day of his appearing, may we be found in him! May we be delivered from the distressing fear of death, by trusting in him who hath subdued Death and taken away its sting. Prepare us for that world into which Death can never enter. By the sanctifying influences of thy Holy Spirit fit us for thy presence above. Make us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; and when the time of our departure from this world shall arrive, may we depart in peace, and have an abundant entrance into thy heavenly kingdom. We present these our petitions in the name of the blessed Mediator; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON LIII.

UNIVERSAL GOOD NEWS.

Mark xvi. 15. Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.

THIS is the commission which our gracious Savior, just about to ascend to glory, was pleased to give to his disciples; on this commission they acted, as their successors have done ever since; so that to this day we enjoy the unspeakable benefit of it, for "to us is the word of this salvation sent."

Jesus Christ had come down from heaven to save sinners; he had employed himself most laboriously in preaching to sinners; he had laid down his precious life for sinners; he was now about to ascend to heaven to plead for sinners; and, by this commission, he is providing

for sinners till he shall come again. Having received all power and authority to govern heaven and earth, he first employs this authority in appointing the ministry of the Gospel; in providing the means of instruction and salvation to unborn millions; promising, at the same time, ever to support, comfort, and succor his ministers; for "Lo! (said he,) I am with you always, even to the end of the world. Amen." May this important promise be fulfilled to us, while we search into the gracious meaning of this divine commission!

We learn from this text, that

It is the gracious will of our Lord Jesus Christ, that the good news of his great salvation should be proclaimed to every human creature.

It may be profitable for us, 1. To inquire into the import of the word *Gospel*, which comprehends what the ministers of Christ are to preach; and, 2. To consider the order here issued for its universal publication. *Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.*

The word *Gospel* is so familiar to our ears, that we sometimes forget what it means. It signifies *good news*; and well deserves that name, for the Gospel brings to our ears the best news that we ever heard. Now, good news, if it be truly such, should bring us—*Information* of facts which we knew not before—*information* of something *great*, in which we are personally concerned—It must be of something *good*, or it cannot be "good news;" and above all, it must be strictly *true*. When all these things are combined, it renders a message *good news*; and all these are certainly combined in the Gospel.

1. The Gospel brings us *news*; news, in the strictest sense; it brings us *information* of the most extraordinary things, which we could never have known without it.—Without the Gospel, who could have ever thought that the great God of heaven would have loved wretched sinners, or sent his dear and only Son into the world to die for them? who could have conceived that such blessings, as pardon, reconciliation, adoption, holiness, and eternal life, should be the portion of ungodly mortals? All this is so strange and extraordinary, that the scripture says of it, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him: but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit," in the Gospel. The world at large, and even the Jews themselves, before the time of the

apostles, could have no just conception of this most sublime and glorious plan of salvation, as it is now revealed in the Gospel: and the more we inquire into it, the more new and surprising it will appear; for the Gospel has this singularity, that, however well acquainted with it we may be, it is always new.

The Gospel brings us tidings of what is *great*, as well as new. Never did a message of so great importance salute the ear of man! Never was any report of equal magnitude with this—"Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners!" The news of a decisive battle, of a glorious victory, of a general peace, may be great news, and greatly affect a whole nation for a time; but, compared with the great events which the Gospel reports, they are trifles light as air, and trivial as the sports of children. The great things of the Gospel affect not a few individuals only, but all the race of Adam; they relate not merely to the present concerns of a single generation, but to the everlasting interest of every succeeding age, until the end of time. Much of that news, which inquisitive men are anxious to receive and to communicate, is of no real consequence to them; but the truths of the Gospel are inseparably connected with our dearest interests; our life, our soul, our all, our everlasting all, is involved in them, according as we duly receive or wilfully reject them. We may say of the Gospel, as Moses did of the law, "It is not a vain thing, it is your life!"

Good news necessarily implies that the tidings relate to something *good*, as well as something new and great; and the Gospel is emphatically and supereminently *good news*. Never was any tidings communicated by such dignified messengers as these. God himself vouchsafed to give the first intimation of them to Adam, when he said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Jehovah, in a human form, repeated the Gospel promise to Abraham, and the fathers. And when the Son of God entered into our world in human flesh, the angel of the Lord announced the grand event, saying, "Behold! I bring you good tidings of great joy." Our Savior put an eternal honor upon the Gospel, by preaching it with his own lips, and employed several successive years in the delightful business: and though it be now preached by men of like passions with their fellow mortals, yet they are Christ's representatives, and beseech us in his stead to be reconciled to God,—relief in the moment of danger, deliverance from

threatening destruction, release from the horrors of confinement, supply in the time of necessity, may all be the subject of joyful news; but neither these, nor any other possible occasion of human gladness, will bear comparison with the marvellous tidings of *grace*. And that which gives them a decided superiority above every information that ever gladdened a sorrowful heart is, that they contain *nothing* but good news, nothing to diminish the joy, or debase the tidings. The news of a great victory over an enemy is much diminished, by reflecting that it has been acquired by shedding an ocean of blood; and that while we are triumphing in the important event, a thousand helpless widows and orphans are bitterly lamenting their various miseries. But the good news of the Gospel is unmingled, it is purely and entirely good, unmingled with any alloy. The Gospel brings to our ears not a single word of grief or sorrow: we shall best conceive its nature by contrasting it with the law.

When the law was given on Sinai, the mountain burned with fire; and there were "thunders, voices, and earthquakes:" God was represented in all the terrible display of his holiness, justice, and awful majesty; and so deeply were the people impressed with terror and dismay, that they entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more; yea, Moses himself, the mediator of that covenant, was not able to sustain the terrors of the scene, for he was forced to say, "I exceedingly fear and quake." And if people, now, were aware of the spiritual extent of the law in its holy and just demands, and of the dreadful displeasure of God, whom they have provoked by their sins, they too would be filled with terror, and beg that the law might not be preached to them any more; but the joyful tidings of the Gospel.

Now, blessed be God, we as Christians, are not called to hear the terrible trumpet of Sinai "sounding long, and waxing louder and louder;" but we are called to Mount Sion, or the Gospel Church, where the sweet and soft sound of the silver trumpet of the Gospel salutes our ear, proclaiming good, the highest good, and nothing but good. So the Savior himself began in the synagogue of Nazareth to utter the melodious sound. Unrolling the volume of the book, he read to this effect, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for the purpose to which he hath anointed me; for he hath sent me to preach good news to the poor; to heal those whose hearts are broken; to proclaim dismissal to captives; the recov-

ery of sight to them that are blind; and to set at liberty them that are bruised; to proclaim the welcome year of the Lord," the year of spiritual jubilee. While every eye was fastened on him, he proceeded to preach on the passage, and to show its accomplishment in himself, when all the hearers are constrained to admire the graceful words which flowed from his lips. These words of grace continue to sound in the ears of all who listen to the joyful report of the Gospel.

And that which renders these tidings completely good is they are *true*; strictly true; divinely true. In eventful periods, when men are eagerly listening for information concerning some most interesting fact; too often, some flying report reaches their ears, which, meeting with their wishes and their interest, is greedily credited; and, for a season, elevates their hearts with joy: but alas! the next messenger, or the next post, contradicts the pleasing intelligence, and blasts all their joys with disappointment and vexation. Not so the Gospel of the blessed God. Not so the good news of salvation; for "God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should change his mind." Every article of the Gospel history was a fulfilment of some ancient prediction, and so gave a wonderful confirmation of its truth; and the numerous miracles which our Lord performed, crowned with his promised resurrection from the dead, left no room to doubt the truth of his Gospel. The first preachers of these glad tidings confirmed them with infallible signs; for they healed the sick, and raised the dead. And the continual efficacy of the word in all succeeding ages, in converting sinners, and in sanctifying and comforting believers, is a standing and a satisfactory proof that the tidings of the Gospel are not only *news*, *great news*, and *good news*, but also infallibly *true*; so that he who believeth shall never be confounded. "Thy word is truth." "The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ."

Consider, for a moment, some of the glorious contents of the Gospel, and it will surely be allowed that the tidings are great and good; consider that weighty saying of our Lord; a saying worthy to be engraven in letters of gold—*God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life*. Observe here, love—the love of God—the love of God in giving his Son, his only begotten Son—in giving him to his creatures—to sinners—to enemies, and that they

might not eternally perish by his justice. How unparalleled, how inexpressible is this love! O the height, the depth, the breadth, the length of the love of God; it surpasseth knowledge!

Consider what the Gospel reports concerning the glorious person, the gracious offices, and wonderful mediation of the Son of God. We justly call the history of these by the evangelists, *The Gospel*; for every thing that it relates concerning Jesus is good news. What joyful tidings is it that "God was manifested in the flesh;" that "the Word, who was with God, and who was God, was made flesh, and dwelt among us!" The residence of a beloved monarch with a loyal people, affords but a low idea of *our* blessedness, since God, in very deed, hath condescended to dwell with man upon the earth. The people of Israel were happy in having among them such a *prophet* as Moses, with whom God spake face to face; but far greater is our felicity, who have Jesus for our instructor, and who, by his word and Spirit, still makes us wise unto salvation.

The *priests* under the law were a blessing to the people, when as their representatives "they offered gifts and sacrifices for their sins;" but "let us consider the Apostle and High Priest of *our* profession," who, once for all, offered *himself* as a propitiation; has put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself; has made an end of sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness; and now appears in the presence of God for us, where he ever lives to make intercession, and is therefore able to save to the uttermost.

The triumphal entrance of a victorious king into the metropolis of his empire, after the destruction of his enemies, hath sometimes made the air to ring with the acclamations of his joyful subjects. "Rejoice greatly (then) O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, *thy* king cometh unto thee: he is righteous, and having salvation;" "and he shall reign for ever and ever"—"The Lord God omnipotent." He has conquered sin, Satan, the world, and death; "and we shall reign with him for ever and ever. Amen."

The rich and solid *blessings* procured for the people of God, and proposed by the Gospel of Christ, are so immensely great, as to entitle it to the name of good news. Here is *pardon*!—"and pardon for infinite offence!"—and pardon by means that speak its value infinite! a pardon bought with blood!" We can scarcely conceive of news more welcome than that of free pardon to a guilty criminal, condemned to

suffer death; and this is precisely the blessing of the Gospel—"Let repentance and remission of sins," said the ascending Savior, "be preached in all nations." "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to the children of men." "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin."

Victory over a bloody tyrannical enemy, is a cause of the greatest exultation! How joyful the abolition of spiritual slavery! How glad those tidings—"Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace!"

How joyful the news, that God will receive us into his family, and treat us as his own beloved children; that he will be our constant guide through this dreary world; that he will protect us from danger all our days; that he will contrive to make all things work together for our good; that he will never leave us nor forsake us; that he will not suffer even death to hurt us, but render us more than conquerors over it; and that he will make us unspeakably happy and glorious, in his own immediate presence, for evermore! All this, and much more than this, the Gospel says, and is it not then "glad tidings of great joy?"

But we must hasten, in the second place, to consider the *order* issued by the King of Zion, for the *universal publication* of this good news—*Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.*

Before this commission was given, the knowledge of the true God was confined, in a great measure, to the Jewish nation; and the religion established among them by divine authority does not seem to have been designed for general adoption. Our Lord thought proper to confine his own labors to the lost sheep of the house of Israel; and he prohibited his disciples from going among the Gentiles. But now the happy time was come, when that great mystery, the calling of the Gentiles, should be unfolded; when the partition wall, which separated Israel from all the world, was to be broken down; and when all the former distinctions were wholly to cease; that so, in Christ Jesus, there might be "neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ be all, and in all" sorts of people.

The general expression in our text—"to every *creature*," is very singular; doubtless every *human creature* is intended; and the expression seems designed to prevent any restriction or limitation whatever, in preaching the Gospel. The Gentiles were heartily despised by the Jews,

and accounted little better than dogs: pride had taught some civilized nations to look upon all others as barbarians: and indeed many of the inhabitants of the earth were sunk so low in brutality, as scarcely to deserve the name of *men*. But our Lord would meet all the objections that could ever arise on this account; “preach the Gospel to every creature;” make no distinctions of civilized and uncivilized; of white, brown, or black; but go into all nations; into all the world; and wherever you find a human being, however base, rude, or vile, preach my Gospel; publish the good news of salvation for them, through faith in my blood.

But the expression, “preach the Gospel to every creature,” is full of divine encouragement to the chief of sinners, *as sinners*;—to sinners of every degree and description. And herein it totally differs from the law. The law spake good only to the *righteous man*; it said “the man that doth it (doth it *all*, and *always*) shall live by it:” but the law hath nothing good to say to the *sinner*. On the contrary it saith, “Cursed is every transgressor.” “The soul that sinneth shall die.” But the Gospel is on purpose for sinners; it is justly called “the religion of a sinner;” nor is one word of it rightly understood, till a man sees that “*sinner*” is his name.

When Jesus was upon earth, such was the encouraging tendency of his preaching, that multitudes of poor abandoned sinners flocked to hear him; and many of them received pardon and grace; but this was turned to his reproach. Self-righteous people, who were proud of their morality, were grievously offended, and gave him this character, “a friend of publicans and sinners;” and so indeed he was, though by no means a friend of sin, as they insinuated.

When the apostles, acting under the commission in the text, first preached the Gospel at Jerusalem, many of the *murderers* of Christ were among the first converts. St. Paul himself had been, before conversion, a bloody persecutor; but having obtained mercy, he holds himself up as a *pattern* to the chief of sinners, that no man who hears the good news of the Gospel should give way to despair. No, “Jesus came to seek and to save the lost;” “he came, not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

The Gospel is addressed to sinners, *as sinners*; and offers pardon to all who hear it. It is a great mistake, but very common, that sinners must first find some worthiness in themselves, by way of a condi-

tion of obtaining mercy: they must be first deeply humbled, and reform their lives, and then they may believe in Christ. But it is plain that this is looking for pardon as *saints*, and not as *sinners*. Whereas the truth is, that God, in the Gospel, *justifieth the ungodly*, Rom. iv. 5. (not that those whom he justifieth remain ungodly *after* they are justified; God forbid!) but they are justified *freely*, by his *grace*, without any respect to godliness; and notwithstanding their *ungodliness*; and that they may become godly: and thus it is, that “where sin abounded, grace doth much more abound.”

APPLICATION.

AND has the Lord of all issued this gracious order, that his good news,—his gracious message, should be published to every creature? then, it follows of course, that it is the duty of every creature, where it is published, to *hear* it. It is Christ himself that speaketh from heaven, wherever the Gospel is spoken; and the command of Jehovah is—“This is my beloved Son, hear him! hear him! hear him!” yes, fellow-sinners, “to-day, if ye will hear his voice:” “while it is called to-day:” “hear, and your souls shall live.” Open your ears to the good news. Shall this be the only good news that you refuse to hear? When profit or pleasure calls, you are all attention; but in all your lives you never heard tidings so good as these. The blessings proposed by the Gospel are such as you greatly need; such as you must perish without; and the hour will come, when you will *feel* your need of them. O that it may not come too late, when the door is shut! your time may be short. Delays are dangerous. And know this, that if you do not welcome this *good news*, you may expect *bad news*; and the verse after the text tells you what it is.—“*He that believeth not shall be damned*;” and how justly will they be damned, who refuse to be saved. If we reject the invitation of Christ to the Gospel feast; and, for the sake of the world and sin, desire to be excused, we shall provoke him to say, “none of the men that were bidden shall taste of my supper.” Yea, there is worse news still. Hear it. “Because I have called, and ye have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh,” &c. Prov. i. 24. As yet, however, the Gospel trumpet sounds. O that you may hear and live!

Christians! is the Gospel good news? Rejoice in it then; let the frame of your

spirit correspond with the nature of the message. Why art thou cast down, O believer! and why is thy heart disquieted within thee? Is there a dejecting word in the Gospel? No, it is *all* good news. You cannot have a want but it supplies; you cannot have an enemy but it disarms; you cannot have a fear but it repels. Reflect not on the Gospel by a gloomy walk; let your neighbors read the good news of the Gospel in your cheerful countenance and holy life. Angels rejoiced when they first published it, and still rejoice when a sinner receives it: ministers rejoice that they have such precious tidings to communicate; yea, Christ himself rejoiced when it was preached by his disciples with success. What cause then have *you* to rejoice!

When good news is received, we are eager to tell it to our friends. Now are there not some of your neighbors, your friends, your relations, who never heard it; never regarded it? O pity them; pray for them; and tell them the news: tell them that "Jesus Christ is come into the world to save sinners;" put a religious tract into their hands; invite them to go with you and hear the Gospel preached; and who can tell but God may be gracious to them?

PRAYER.—THANKS, everlasting thanks, be to thee, O God of mercy and love, for the good news of the Gospel! Blessed, for ever blessed, be thy name, for the message of grace sent from Heaven to ungodly sinners. We account it a faithful saying, and worthy of our most cordial acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, not excepting even the chief of them. O that none among us may refuse to hear him who speaketh from Heaven!—for how can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? But, may we so hear that our souls may live! May we mix faith with the word, then shall it truly profit us; for thou, O Lord, hast said, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. O that we may enjoy the comforts of the Gospel, and walk according to its holy precepts; and, as it was mercifully designed for all nations, and commanded to be preached to every creature, speak the word, O Lord, and great shall be the company of them that publish it; and so let thy way be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations. Accept, O Lord, our praises, and hear our prayers, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

SERMON LIV.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

Matt. xiii. 18. Hear ye therefore the parable of the Sower.

THE preaching of the Gospel is an ordinance of God; it is a sacred appointment of heaven, for the most important pur-

poses; it is the mean generally employed for this salvation of men: for "it pleaseth God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

But all are not saved who hear the Gospel; it has very different effects on different persons: and it is the design of this parable to point out those different effects. Our Lord here compares the minister of the Gospel to a husbandman, the world to a field, and the word of God to seed-corn. He supposes some of the seed to fall upon a hard-beaten path; some of it into a shallow soil with a rocky bottom; some of it near the hedge among weeds; and a part of it into good ground, where it remains, springs up, and comes to maturity. By these different circumstances, he describes, with wonderful beauty and propriety, the various hearers of the Gospel. Some of them are careless and inattentive; others make a showy but short profession; others lose all the benefit of the word by their worldly-mindedness; but others, by the special grace of God, receive and retain his truth, and bring forth abundance of fruit to his glory, and their own salvation.

Let us then address ourselves to the serious consideration of this excellent parable, which we may do with the greater pleasure, as we are sure not to mistake its meaning; for our Lord was pleased to give an interpretation of it to his disciples; and this shall be our guide.

1. Let us first consider the *careless hearer*.

In a field, especially in a common field, it often happens that there is a road or foot-path lying across it; and in scattering the seed, it is likely that some of it may fall on this path, which, being hard and beaten, is not fit for the reception of the seed; it lies uncovered, and is soon trodden down by the foot of the passenger, or picked up by the numerous birds which generally hover about a field when it is sown.

This is a natural and perfect picture of a very numerous class, probably of far the greater part of hearers. Their hearts are totally unprepared for the word; not at all plowed up by godly sorrow for sin; but hard and impenitent, so that the Gospel makes no impression upon them. They come to the house of God without having prayed at home for his blessing; without any spiritual desire to be profited; without an humble, teachable disposition; without a wish to know and to do the will of God.

Such persons are usually *inattentive*, they sit like others who diligently listen to the word; but *they* do not listen; their thoughts are otherwise employed. Their

eyes are surveying the congregation; observing who they are, and how they are dressed; for many go to church either to see or be seen; and take so much notice of the apparel of their neighbors, especially if it be new or peculiar, that it becomes a fruitful topic of discourse at home or in company.

The *preacher* is sometimes the object of attention, but not his *message*. They notice his person, his voice, his attitude; and perhaps make some critical remarks on his sermon; or notice a sentence or two which happened to catch their attention during the train of vain thoughts which occupied their minds.

It is astonishing to think how commonly the imagination is suffered to carry away the hearer from his proper business. Instead of a serious regard to the divine and interesting truths which the minister delivers, the careless hearer indulges his mind in the contemplation of schemes of worldly business; or he is pursuing some plan of future pleasure and amusements; or, what is still worse, allowing some speculative abomination to defile his heart, even in the presence of God. On these accounts it may be feared that, in the piercing view of the omniscient Searcher of hearts, a place of worship is sometimes a scene of greater wickedness than any other upon earth, and more provoking to his pure and holy eyes; for "he is not deceived, and will not be mocked." O how many may adopt the confession of the wanton person in the Proverbs (v. 12.) "How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof; and have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me. I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation!"

On these accounts it is that many persons present at a sermon can hardly be said to *hear*. What our Lord says of the Jews (ver. 15.) is awfully true of many of us, "this people's heart is waxed gross—and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and *hear with their ears*, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." Some are willingly and wilfully ignorant; they shut their ears against the call of God; and though they attend upon sermons, yet never hear them. A person who attended preaching all her life, confessed to her minister on her dying bed, "that *she never heard but one sermon*," and that was the last before her illness; it was chari-

tably hoped that she had heard it to purpose, and died in the faith and hope of the Gospel. But throughout all her former days, such was the vanity of her mind, that though she was present under many hundred sermons, she never so attended as properly to *hear* one of them; and doubtless this is exactly the case with a great number among us.

It is said of this sort of people (ver. 19.) that they do not *understand* the word, and that this is one cause of its unfruitfulness. It cannot be expected that persons who are so inattentive should understand it. The truths of the Gospel, though sufficiently plain and easy to the serious Christian, yet require the exercise of our rational powers; and if persons are too idle to bestow this, they must remain in darkness and the shadow of death.

Another cause assigned by our Lord for the failure of the seed in the way-side hearer is, that *Satan cometh immediately, and catcheth away that which was sown*; just as the birds pick up the grains of corn which lie uncovered on the beaten path; and this he does, *lest they should believe and be saved*. (Luke viii. 12.)

Satan, who is justly called "the wicked one," as being himself wicked, and the promoter of wickedness in others, is well aware of the great importance of hearing the word aright: he knows, that if it be seriously regarded, understood, remembered, and mixed with faith, it becomes "the power of God to salvation:" it is therefore a great point with him to prevent its efficacy; and the surest way of doing this is to divert the mind from it immediately. This great enemy of our souls has certainly access to our minds; and though he cannot force us to sin, can present temptations to it. We are so ignorant of the nature and operation of spirit, that we cannot say in what manner he does this; but we are sure, from the word of Christ himself, that so it is. He certainly exerts his powers to keep people from hearing it; or, to excite their prejudices against it; or, to prevent a due recollection of it afterwards: and in either of these ways he succeeds.

It is truly affecting to think how entirely the most precious truths of God are lost upon many persons; there is not a single trace of them left on their memory: they take no pains to remember what they have heard; or if the text, for form sake, be recollected, this is all; a story or a tale, however idle, is not so soon forgotten; but that word, "which is able to save our souls," is lost in total oblivion.

One cause of this is, that such hearers are strangers to *retirement* on the Lord's day; instead of entering into their closets and praying for a blessing on the sermon, they take a walk for amusement, where every new object diverts the mind from what they have heard. Visiting on Sundays has the same pernicious tendency, for the conversation is generally on trifling subjects; and if it be merely compliment or censure on the preacher, it answers no good purpose. It is thus that Satan steals the word from our hearts; it is thus that thousands of good sermons are lost; yea, it is thus that thousands of immortal souls are lost—for ever lost.

2. But we must proceed in the *second* place to consider the character of the *temporary hearer*; or, as some have termed it, the *enthusiastic hearer*; that is, the person who hears the good news of pardon, life, and glory with a transport of joy; feels his natural passions elevated; but, having no root of humble conviction and genuine love to holiness, endures but for a time; "for when affliction or *persecution* ariseth for the world's sake, he is immediately offended and falleth away." This sort of hearer is figuratively described by that portion of the seed which fell on strong soil, or on a rock covered with a very shallow bed of earth; here, though it might spring up, and quickly too, yet, having little or no root, and no depth of soil to supply it with sufficient moisture, it was scorched with the burning sun, and withered entirely away.

This sort of hearer differs much from the first. He is not inattentive; he is not indifferent; he hears what is said, and hears it with pleasure; he is *forward* to hear; he has warm and lively passions, which are suddenly affected with the novelty and grandeur of Gospel truths, especially if delivered with zeal and pathos; he is mightily struck and charmed with his new religion, and becomes a warm, perhaps violent advocate for it.

The facts and truths reported by the Gospel are indeed great and glorious beyond expression. The divine perfections—the immortality of the soul—the miserable condition of a sinner—the love of God—the sufferings of Christ—the pardon of iniquity—the felicity of the heavenly world, are all subjects of a very striking and affecting nature. If these are preached in an animating and powerful manner, and perhaps in the midst of attentive thousands, the hearer who is divested of prejudice, and who possesses a warm and lively imagination, is immediately struck

and moved; the preacher is unto him "as the lovely song of one who hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on a musical instrument:" he is charmed and delighted, just in the same manner as he would be at a well-performed play, and with just as much religion. His conscience accords with the great truths he hears; and, prompted by self-love, he flatters himself that he is become, all at once, a very good Christian, and has an interest in all the blessings which he hears described.

But this shallow professor *has no root*; in other words, he has no true understanding of the doctrines of the Gospel, especially as they relate to his fallen condition as a sinner: he has no humbling views of himself, as a guilty, helpless creature, exposed to divine wrath, and utterly unable to help himself. He receives some crude notions of the Gospel hastily, and without examination, taking all he hears for granted; but his judgment is not informed; his conscience not convinced; his heart not humbled: his will is not subdued; his affections are not sanctified. He has no genuine faith; his new opinions of religion are not derived from the testimony of God, but from that of man. He has a prodigious esteem for this or that favorite preacher, while, probably, he despises all others; and the whole of his religion is usually *public*, consisting chiefly in hearing many sermons; while he is a stranger to meditation, self-examination, and private prayer; neglects family religion, and appears to be under no influence of godliness in his life and conversation.

Can we now wonder if such a profession be short-lived? If this be all his religion, it cannot last long. There is "no depth of earth;" and as a feeble plant with a long stalk, and little root, in a shallow bed of mould, must soon wither, if exposed to a hot sun; so a profession of this kind, if assaulted by persecution, will quickly come to naught: like Jonah's gourd, which sprung up in a night, and perished as hastily beneath a scorching sun.

In the early days of Christianity, the disciple of Christ was almost sure to meet with violent opposition; both Jews and Gentiles exerted all their powers to suppress the religion of Jesus. Thus the profession of his disciples was soon brought to a fiery test; and where there was no root, no principle of grace, apostasy would quickly ensue. The same trial of faith has been the lot of many Christians in different ages of the world; nor are *we* to expect a total freedom from it now. We live, it is true, in a Christian country,

where Christianity is the religion of the nation; but faith must nevertheless have its trial; and "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus," must have a portion of "persecution." If we are serious, sincere, and consistent in our attachments to the truths, ordinances, and people of God; if we are determined not to comply with the fashions and vanities of the world, we shall meet with opposers; and if these should arise among our near relations, and persons of influence, on whom we depend, our profession will be tried to purpose: if there be no depth of earth, no root, this hot sun will wither our sapless stalk, and we shall become barren and unfruitful.

Indeed, where no such heavy trial as this befalls us, circumstances the most trivial may be sufficient. An offence taken with the minister for his supposed personality in preaching, or at his want of sufficient respect and attention to his hearer; a wholesome reproof given in public or private; the exercise of godly discipline in a Christian society; or even a dispute with a fellow-member, a disgust taken upon a seat in a church or chapel, or something else full as trifling, shall prove a cause of offence, and the temporary professor lay aside all his religion.

There is a *third* sort of unprofitable hearers next to be considered; this is the *worldly-minded*.

Our Lord compares these to *the seed which fell among thorns*; these *thorns sprang up with it, and choked it*, so that *it yielded no fruit*; that is, this sort of hearers so far embrace the word as to make a promising profession of the Gospel, and afford some good appearance of reformation by it; but, "through the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, the pleasures of life, and the lusts of other things, it cometh unfruitful."

As the second sort of hearers went further than the first, so the third sort goes further than the second, and yet not far enough to be profitable hearers, or real Christians. In the first case, negligence was the bane; in the second, want of principle; in this, the love of the world. Carelessness ruins many; persecution oversets others; prosperity destroys the rest.

Anxious cares are here compared to thorns, and indeed very justly, for both are the fruits of sin; the pricking thorns in the hedge are fit emblems of corroding cares in the heart, and nothing more effectually hinders the success of the word. Some degree of care is necessary for the proper management of our lawful affairs; and "he that provideth not for his own

household is worse than an infidel," but the cares of this life are apt to become immoderate and hurtful: they wholly engross the time, even that part of it which should be devoted to the more important concerns of eternity; they occupy the thoughts, which should be directed towards spiritual objects; they unfit the mind for religious duties, distract the heart in them, and prevent suitable reflections after them; they quench useful impressions when actually made, and glue the affections to the sordid things of this world.

"*Deceitful riches*" also choke the growing word, and hinder its fruits. Riches are called deceitful, because they delude the possessor, as well as the spectator, with a false appearance of happiness; for the real happiness of a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of his possessions: but they deceive in a worse sense, they lead the possessor, or the pursuer of riches to put off from day to day the vast concerns of his soul, under the pretence of pressing affairs of this world, and so cheat him out of his salvation. O how many such persons "fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition!"

"*The pleasures of life*" ruin many other professors. Some pleasures are lawful, others unlawful; but even lawful pleasures, immoderately pursued, are destructive to the soul: and those who are not distracted by cares, nor deceived by riches, may be seduced by pleasure. When it becomes the chief business of life to gratify the senses, to indulge the eye with every curiosity, the ear with the most enchanting sounds, the taste with the choicest delicacies,—then men become "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." A life of sensuality and voluptuousness is inconsistent with the life of faith, which requires humility, self-denial, and mortification. It steals away the heart from God, deprives men of all vigor and zeal in religion, and utterly prevents their producing fruit unto perfection.

Thus have we taken a view of three sorts of persons, in each of which the proper effect of the good word of God is hindered—the careless—the temporary—and the worldly hearer. These, alas! are too numerous; and where is the congregation in which all these kinds of hearers may not be found? Yet blessed be God! it is not thus with all who hear the Gospel. There is one more description of persons, who may be called *sincere hearers*; who happily escape the preceding mischiefs, and who bring forth the good fruit of sub-

stantial holiness in various degrees. These are described in the parable by *the seed which fell on good ground, and did yield fruit: that sprang up, and increased, and brought forth, some thirty, and some sixty, and some an hundred fold*; and these, as our Lord explains it, are they *who hear the word, and understand, and receive it, and keep it in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience.*

The good ground represents "*good and honest hearts*;" that is, hearts renewed by the Spirit of God, and which receive the doctrine of the Gospel with a sincere faith, and an upright desire of improving it to all the practical purposes for which it is designed.

These persons are said to *understand it*; to *receive it*; and to *keep it*; all these are necessary to fruitfulness. 1. They *understand it*; none of the rest are said to do so; and indeed none can, till the Lord the Spirit open their understandings to understand the Scriptures. God has promised that all his children shall be taught of him; and that they shall know the truth, and the truth shall make them free.

2. They are said to *receive it*; they see the beauty, propriety, and divine excellency of Gospel truth, and embrace it with the most cordial approbation: they "*receive it, not as the word of man, but as the word of God.*"

3. They *retain it*; it is not stolen by the birds of the air, but lodged in the memory, and kept in the affections, as a sacred deposit. Thus David says,—"*Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee*;" and in another place he says, "*I will never forget thy precepts.*"

4. They *practise it*, for "*they bring forth fruit to perfection*;" that is, the grain arrives at a state of maturity, which it did not in either of the former cases. The way-side hearer brought forth not a single blade; the stony-ground only a stalk, which was soon burnt up; and the thorny-ground only a lean withered ear, empty of grain; but here, the full design of the farmer is answered; and the single grain sown in the earth, produces a number of grains of the same nature with the seed, and thus crowns all his labors and his hopes.

The proper fruits of the word as sown in the heart, are, *piety* toward God, *benevolence* toward men, and *temperance* in the government of ourselves. The whole is expressed briefly by St. Paul, when he describes the effects of the Gospel: "*it*

teaches us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live righteously, and soberly, and godly in this present world."

But it must be observed, that this genuine fruit is not produced in every real Christian in the same degree—"some thirty, some sixty, some an hundred fold." Some begin to serve the Lord betimes; and therefore, in the course of many years, have greater opportunities than those who begin late. Some possess larger mental powers; a superior station in life; greater opportunities of usefulness; a sweeter or more active temper than others; and, by the divine blessing on these and other advantages, bring forth a larger proportion of fruit than others. But it should be the prayer and endeavor of all to be as fruitful as possible, for "*herein is my Father glorified*," said our adorable Master, "*if ye bring forth much fruit.*"

And now, my dear friends, what shall we learn from this excellent parable? Take the sum of its instruction in a single sentence—a sentence pronounced by our Lord himself immediately after it.

Take heed, therefore, how ye hear!

Indeed, sirs, it is no trifling matter. We may forget sermons, but *God* will not. If he will call us to account for idle words spoken by ourselves, can we suppose he will require no account of his own holy word spoken to us? O it is a dangerous thing to trifle with the Gospel! It will be found at last—"the savor of life unto life, or the savor of death unto death."

Beware then of resembling the *way-side* hearer. Go not to the house of God in a gay, inconsiderate spirit; nor behave there with irreverence and inattention; it is an insult to heaven, and an injury to your own soul. Beware also of the birds of the air when you leave the church. Disappoint the watchful enemy of souls who waits for your destruction; retire; recollect, and pray over the sermon.

Dread the thought of being a *temporary* hearer. Be not satisfied with the emotion of your passions under the word. Be concerned to have "*the root of the matter*" within you; so that, in the hour of temptation, you may be able to stand your ground, and not "*draw back to perdition.*"

Beware of a *worldly mind*. Anxious cares, deceitful riches, and carnal pleasures, choke the word, and render it fruitless. But will you place these in the balance with the glory of God and your eternal welfare? O be wiser, and remember that weighty saying, "*What is a man*

profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Finally, let it be your constant study and prayer to be *sincere* and *fruitful* hearers. Endeavor, by a serious, diligent attention, to *understand* the word; by the exercise of precious faith cordially to *receive* it; by private meditation and prayer to *retain* it; and by daily observation to bring it into *practice*. I close with the words with which our Lord himself closed the parable—"And when he had said these things, he *cried*," probably with a louder voice than before: and O that the cry may reach our inmost souls!—"He that hath ears to hear, let him hear!"

PRAYER.—ALMIGHTY God, we esteem thy word as one of thy choicest gifts, and one for which we must give an account to thee in the day of judgment. Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning, grant that we may in such wise *hear* them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience, and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Savior Jesus Christ.

We desire to take heed *how* we hear. We would dread the thoughts of being *way-side* hearers,—careless and inattentive. Nor let us be merely *temporary* professors,—satisfied with transient emotions of our passions, but without root, or depth of earth. Preserve us also from being *worldly-minded* hearers of the word, in whom the good seed is choked by anxious cares, or deceitful riches; but may the blessed word find a place in our hearts, as in good ground. May we understand it!—may we receive it!—may we retain it!—and not being forgetful hearers, but doers of the word, may we practise it, and bring forth abundantly the fruits of temperance, piety, and benevolence, to the glory of thy holy name, through Jesus Christ, our only Mediator and Advocate! Amen.

SERMON LV.

THE CONVERSION OF LYDIA.

Acts xvi. 14. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

THE Gospel of Jesus Christ is a blessing, the value of which can never be fully expressed. Blessed, truly blessed, is the people who know the joyful sound! Those who know it best will praise it most;—prize it above gold and silver; yea, above their necessary food. Those also, who are appointed to preach it, will rejoice in every opportunity of publishing the glad tidings

to their fellow-men. Thus did the first preachers of it; thus did Paul and Silas, in the case before us.

In the course of their travels, they were peculiarly directed to Macedonia; they were fully assured that the Lord had called them to preach the Gospel in that country. They obeyed the heavenly calling, and came to Philippi, the chief city of that district. The text relates the first fruits of their labors there. For some time, indeed, no opportunity seemed to offer itself for the commencement of their work. They were "in that city abiding certain days," praying, no doubt, and patiently waiting for the leadings of Divine Providence.

At length, on the Sabbath-day, they walked to a place near the city, on the banks of the river Strymon, where the few Jews, or other devout persons, who lived at Philippi, were used to meet for social prayer. They lived among heathens, who knew not Jehovah, and who paid no regard to the Sabbath;* but these persons, who knew and worshipped the true God, used to resort to this retired place, that they might offer up their joint prayers, and encourage each other to persevere in the religion of their pious ancestors. Probably they were too few, or too poor, to be able to support a synagogue, as in many other places; but what they could, they did: and it is highly commendable for all persons, when at a distance from their regular places of worship, to maintain, as well as they can, the worship of their God, and the profession of their religion, even among heathens.

In this place, the ministers of Christ found a few pious *women*. We read of no *men* there. Perhaps these were on journeys of business in the country: or, their hearts were grown cold about the service of Jehovah, preferring the love of gain to the love of God. However, to these women St. Paul addressed himself, declaring the great truths of the Gospel, respecting the salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ. Let us, like him, seize every proper opportunity of diffusing the knowledge of a Savior. The truth of the Gospel is of infinite importance to all mankind. Ministers are to preach it wherever they can. Pious people should converse about it on all convenient occasions, invite their neighbors to hear it, and put religious tracts into their hands. Who can tell how happy the effects of such exertions may prove!

* Philippi was a colony of Romans, probably formed of veteran soldiers, to whom land in its vicinity had been granted in reward for their military services.

We are not informed *what things* they were which Paul spake to these women; but as it was his determination elsewhere, so no doubt here also, to know nothing among the people but Christ, and him crucified. Indeed, we are told in this chapter, (ver. 10.) that it was "the Gospel" which he was "*called to preach*" in this country; and no doubt it was the Gospel he *did* preach to the women—the good news of salvation by Jesus Christ. And afterwards, (ver. 17.) when St. Paul and his companion were better known in Philippi, this was the report of their character—"These men are the servants of the most high God, which show unto us the way of salvation." This is indeed the first and chief duty of a minister of Christ; and may the ministers of Christ never forget it is so! We are also informed (xxxi. 32) that they spake to the jailor and his family "the word of the Lord," directing them to believe in Jesus Christ, that they might be saved. These are "the things of Christ," "the things of the Spirit," "the things which belong to our peace," the things which the faithful servants of Christ are bound to publish, and which they who are ordained to eternal life, are enabled to hear and to believe.

We may observe, that it is very pleasant to speak of spiritual things to devout persons, such as Lydia was. There are people of "the baser sort, who speak evil of the things they know not:" and who are so brutish as to refuse a patient hearing to the most interesting truths; but Lydia and her friends were worshippers of God; and being met together for prayer, they were ready to listen to what the apostle had to offer to their notice. We do not say, with the papists, that such a disposition "*deserves grace*:" that is a contradiction in terms, for grace is kindness undeserved. To grace, we must ascribe this very disposition; for, in general, persons turn their backs on all religious instruction; and sometimes manifest the malignity of their hearts by abusing the messengers of God, and the friends of their souls. To the special grace of God it is also ascribed, that Lydia did regard and receive the Gospel; so that it is not to be referred to her good disposition, naturally; but to the mercy and special influence of heaven; "the Lord opened her heart." It is an excellent thing to have a teachable mind. Whoever possesses it may be thankful, and expect a blessing from all the means of grace. Our Savior himself says, (John vii. 17.) "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be

of God," or not: as if he had said—"Whoever will lay aside his prejudices, and make serious and impartial inquiries into the will of God, by hearing, reading, and meditation, with a sincere desire to learn and practise it, he will be sure to find enough in the Gospel to recommend it; and will feel such good effects of it in his own heart, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, as shall oblige him to conclude, with complete satisfaction, that it is of God and not of men." It is a happy thing when people so read and hear the doctrines of the Gospel. They shall have the blessing that Lydia obtained.

In the further consideration of these words we shall observe, that,

1. There is, in general, an awful, a criminal indisposition towards the things of God.

The affairs of this world, its profits and its pleasures, engage the ear and possess the heart. They are pursued with avidity; they are constant subjects of inquiry, of conversation, and of delight. But how are the great doctrines, privileges, and duties of the Gospel regarded? How are the interesting concerns of the immortal soul and the eternal world attended to? The Gospel presents to our view things the most wonderful, the most interesting, the most awful, and the most delightful. But how are they received? Just as they were in our Savior's days. Of this generation we may say, as he did of that "It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling to their fellows, and saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and you have not lamented." The most charming and affecting subjects of the Gospel excite no joy; the most dreadful representations of the word occasion no alarm; mankind are moved by neither; they equally disregard both. Let us inquire a little further into the unhappy causes of this fatal inattention to divine things.

Alas! for some persons, they are altogether become *brutish* in sin; for vice, where it has long reigned, brutalizes the soul, and leaves the man scarcely rational. Some are so deplorably immersed in sensuality, that it is almost impossible to gain their attention for a single moment to any thing serious and religious. The mention of any sacred truth excites only a smile of derision, and they treat with contempt the most heavenly and holy matters. It is especially the case with those, who have accustomed themselves to foolish talking and jesting, and whose imagination is so defiled and debauched, that the most sol-

em and sacred things are turned into folly and laughter. This is a most unhappy state of mind, and which young people should take pains, before it be too late, to avoid. Such persons are indeed "sensual, not having the Spirit," and to them the wisdom of God itself is no better than foolishness.

Prejudice against the truths, the ministers, and the professors of the Gospel, is another powerful cause of inattention to it. Prejudice of this kind jaundices the mind, and every doctrine of the word is seen through a false medium. Much of this prejudice may be traced to education, many children being taught to despise and revile every form of religion but that of their parents. Hence arises that dangerous bigotry, which will scarcely deign to allow the hearing of Gospel truth, unless it be presented precisely in a certain mode. Hence thousands are kept from ever employing the right of private judgment, or using the Scriptures as a touchstone, content to pin their faith on the sleeves of others. Some odious name is frequently attached to the faithful and laborious servants of Christ. The apostles themselves were said to "turn the world upside down," and their adherents were deemed "a sect everywhere spoken against." The immaculate Jesus himself was "called a deceiver, a Samaritan, a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." Thus, among ourselves, one opprobrious name is sufficient to counterbalance, in a prejudiced mind, all the wisdom and piety that can be collected in a sermon, in a book, or in a minister.

Other persons are kept from duly attending to the truth, by the love of the world, which prevails in their hearts. Like Pilate, they have no fault to find in the Gospel preacher; nay, they will bestow occasional commendation on him, and allow that he is good, and zealous, and useful among the common people; but the world so fills their hearts, that there is not a corner in them left for Christ and his word. Business occupies the greater part of such a person's time; and how are his leisure hours employed? He wants amusement, and must seek it in the tavern, the theatre, or some other haunt of dissipation. He cannot relish retirement; he knows not what it is to sit down and read his Bible, or spend half an hour in thoughtfulness and self-examination. He can sometimes devote a whole day to a party of pleasure, but cannot spare an hour to hear a sermon. This indisposition towards the word of grace is peculiarly displayed on the Lord's

day. He makes his weariness on Saturday night an apology for his sloth on the Sunday morning; and when he rises, it is only to dress for a ride, a walk, or a visit: he indulges his appetite at dinner, and renders his mind incapable of serious attention for some hours; and then the evening is spent in sauntering, or in vanity. Thus, those precious hours are wasted, which should have been diligently devoted to prayer, reading and hearing the word of life. Thus he makes light of that heavenly truth, which, through faith, is able to save the soul; and thus, if sovereign grace interpose not, he lives and dies in sin, and unbelief.

Let us now proceed to state what that attention is, which the great things of God demand from every rational creature, and such as, we have reason to believe, was paid to the word by Lydia.

(1.) A *candid* attention. The preacher of the Gospel should not be pre-judged, or condemned unheard. If he be a man of good reputation and character, let him be fairly heard, and let his doctrine be impartially weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. The people of Berea are commended on this account, Acts xvi. 11. "They were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so." The Bereans were of a more noble, candid, and generous disposition; they heard the apostle candidly, and they searched the Scriptures from day to day, that they might judge for themselves of the truth of what he delivered; and, acting thus, they found such a correspondence between the Christian preacher and the Jewish prophet, that many of them believed.

(2.) A *serious* attention is due to the word, for it presents to our minds the most serious subjects in the world. Death and judgment, heaven and hell, are serious things, and should be seriously regarded. We should not bring a light and trifling mind to the word of God. Are we not mortals? The word addresses us as such. Are we not sinners? The word is directed to us as such, and seriously sets before us the pardon that guilty criminals need. Are we not spiritually diseased? The Gospel proposes a certain remedy. Are we not at variance with God? Reconciliation with him, through Jesus, is set before us. We are the wretched slaves of sin and Satan; the Gospel is a proclamation of redemption and liberty. We are miserably poor and needy; but the word of God

holds forth to us the true riches. We know we must shortly die, and leave this world; the word of life teaches us how to conquer death, and to insure an inheritance in the skies. Surely these things are so important and interesting, as to demand from us a very serious attention.

(3.) A *devout* attention is requisite. Does God, the great God of heaven, speak to us? Yes, indeed he does. He speaketh from heaven by his word: and this is the only way in which he will speak to us. We are not to desire a messenger from the heavenly world, as the rich man in the parable did. The revelation of the divine will in the Scripture is complete: nothing must be added to it, nothing diminished from it. "These things are written, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, we might have life through his name." What reverence then is due to the word of God! In this manner the Thessalonians heard the Gospel from the mouth of the apostle, and he commends them for it, (1 Thess. ii. 13.). "For this cause also we thank God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." Observe—these people not only gave it a hearing, but their hearts were opened, like Lydia's, to attend to it, and embrace it with reverence; not as a human scheme, but as a revelation from God, and on the ground of his authority. Too many persons, in hearing, look no further than to men, and to the words of men; and if they are pleased, it is with the voice or manner of the preacher: but we should hear the word of God as the word of God, and if we do so, it will be with reverence of soul.

(4.) A *diligent* attention is demanded of us. It is not a trifling matter which it represents to us; it is for our life, and therefore should be regarded with the utmost vigor and energy of our souls. O, it is affecting to think what little pains are bestowed on the great concern, compared with what are employed on the ordinary business or the trifling amusements of time! How many are there, who never took a hundredth part of the pains to secure eternal life, that they have taken to learn the business, by which they get their bread; and how many must have been starved to death, had they not been more diligent for their bodies than they have been for their souls! What labor and pains have been employed in learning

Latin or French, compared with what have been used in reading the word of God! How many more hours have some young persons spent at a musical instrument, than they ever devoted to the means of grace! yea, in some cases, how much more attention to the card-table, than to the word of life! But the Gospel of God demands our most diligent regard. The word of Christ must "dwell in us richly;" we must "meditate upon it day and night;" and "hide it in our hearts, that we may not sin against God." Let it be remembered, that we hear and read for *eternity*; let those words sound in our ears—for ever! for ever! for ever! and it will oblige us to give diligent heed to the word of life.

(5.) A *believing* attention is also necessary. The Gospel is called "the faith," and "the word of faith," because it is proposed to our faith, and received by it. It is the testimony of Jehovah, and demands the fullest credit. The word cannot profit our souls, unless it be "mixed with faith," and then it becomes "the ingrafted word, which is able to save our souls." It is proposed "for the obedience of faith;" and when it is obeyed, it becomes the power of God to our salvation. When we understand the Gospel aright, and perceive that Jesus is the only, all-sufficient, Redeemer of lost sinners, we are encouraged to trust in him alone; we are constrained to esteem and love him above all; and enabled to comply with his directions, desiring to obey him "in all things, whatsoever he hath commanded."

(6.) A *joyful* attention well becomes those who are favored with "the joyful sound." If the Gospel be understood, it will appear to be nothing but glad tidings of great joy. It proclaims pardon; free, full, and everlasting pardon for the chief of sinners. And if this be really believed, it must excite joy. It did so in all the first converts to Christianity. When Philip went down to Samaria, "and preached Christ unto them, there was great joy in that city." When the jailer at Philippi heard the word of the Lord, "he rejoiced, with all his house." And the Thessalonians "received the word," though in the midst of severe outward troubles, "with joy in the Holy Ghost;" with such inward consolation, as made rich amends for all their afflictions. Finally,

(7.) A *practical* attention is due to this holy word. And where it is truly received it cannot fail of "working by love." That pretended faith, which is inactive and alone, is dead; it is not the faith of God's elect. A true believer is a "doer of the

word." Therefore St. James says, (chap. i. 22,) "Be ye *doers* of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own souls." He compares a mere hearer to a man observing his face in a glass, and slightly perceives some spots of dirt upon it; but it makes no impression, he soon forgets it, and the spots remain unwashed; on the other hand, the true believer intently looks into the doctrine of the Gospel, which is a doctrine of spiritual liberty; he *continues* therein—does not forget it—is not careless and unmindful of what he heard, or of what he saw of himself in that faithful glass, but takes care to live in the exercise of every grace, and in the practice of every duty—"this man shall be blessed in his deed;" "his fruit is unto holiness, and his end shall be everlasting life." (Rom. vi. 22.)

It now only remains to observe, that *wherever the word of God is attended to in this manner, it must be ascribed to the grace of God*—"the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, that she attended unto the things spoken of Paul."

Many women, perhaps, besides Lydia, heard St. Paul's discourse; but we do not read that any besides her was converted at that time. It was grace alone that made her to differ; "the Lord opened her heart." Her piety beforehand in worshipping the true God was commended; but her hearing the word to profit is ascribed to the power of God. The eyes of her understanding were enlightened by the Spirit; for he alone is "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ;" he only can "take of the things of Christ, and show them unto us." Without the heavenly influence, working in and by the word, such is the blindness of our minds, and the carnal enmity of our hearts, that we should never receive the Gospel aright; for St. Paul testifies that "the natural man (including the most rational man) "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither *can he know them*, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. ii. 14.) Our Lord also plainly told the Jews, that no man could come to him unless drawn by the Father; but when he is pleased to exert his gracious influence, it is at once effectual, as it was in the case of Lydia. "When the Lord himself (says the amiable archbishop Leighton) speaks by his Spirit to a man, selecting and calling him out of the lost world, he can no more disobey than Abraham did, when the Lord spoke to him, after an extraordinary manner, to depart from his country and kin-

dred. There is a secret, but very powerful, virtue in a word, or look, or touch of this Spirit upon the soul, by which it is forced, not with a harsh, but pleasing violence, and cannot choose but follow it; not unlike that of Elijah's mantle upon Elisha, 1 Kings xix. 19. How easily did the disciples forsake their callings and dwellings to follow Christ!" It was with this sweet but powerful influence the Lord touched the heart of Lydia. Her heart was opened, never more to be closed against the voice of God's Spirit. It was not a mere temporary affection to the world, a mere religious *fit*, as the apparent zeal of some may be called, but a renovation of heart and nature, whereby she became a new creature, devoted sincerely to Christ. Her sincerity was soon conspicuous, for she was not ashamed nor afraid openly to confess Jesus of Nazareth, both among Jews and pagans; but was speedily baptized in his name. Her zeal was manifested by consecrating her whole family, (probably children and servants) to the Lord, for they also were baptized. She also displayed her love to Christ by a generous regard to his ministers; for she constrained them to lodge at her house, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there." Thus did the Lord open the heart of Lydia, and thus he opens the hearts of all his people. "The understanding is opened to receive the divine light, the will opened to receive the divine law, and the affections opened to receive the divine love: and when the heart is thus opened to Christ, the ear is opened to his word, the lips are opened in prayer, the hands opened in charity, and the steps enlarged in all manner of Gospel obedience.

To conclude. Let us be sincerely thankful for the word. To us, even to us, is the word of this salvation sent. He hath showed his word to Britain, his judgments to England. He hath not dealt so with every nation.—Praise ye the Lord!—When a scarcity of bread is felt, how severe do we deem the affliction! When plenty is restored, how great do we esteem the benefit! how much greater is the gift of the Gospel! Philippi was highly favored when Paul and Silas paid it a visit. But we are more highly favored. We have Peter and Paul, and the Evangelists. We have Christ himself in his written word, together with the assistance of his ministers, to explain it to us. Bless ye the Lord!

But how much is it to be lamented, that the human heart is so generally shut

against the word of life! Ah! what enemies to their own souls are such persons! "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Well may we adopt the lamentation of Jeremiah, "Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud, for the Lord hath spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride, and mine eyes shall weep sore, and run down with tears." The obstinacy of sinners in refusing to hear the voice of Christ is extremely affecting to a pious Christian, to a serious minister. It was so to the compassionate heart of our blessed Redeemer, for when he drew near to the rebellious city of Jerusalem, and foresaw its approaching desolation, "he wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." The season of obtaining eternal life is but a day; if this be lost, the day of vengeance will succeed. Let us dread the thought of rejecting the counsel of God against ourselves, and so perishing in unbelief; and let us, who are now favored with opportunities of reading and hearing the word, make a good use of them, lest they be finished, before the benefit designed by them is received.

We have been hearing of the grace of God in opening Lydia's heart. But let us not consider this merely as a history. Let each of us say—Has my heart been opened in the same manner? Have I regarded the word of life with a candid, serious, devout, diligent, *believing*, joyful, and practical attention? If not, surely my neglecting my best interest, and my contempt of the great God who speaketh from heaven, is highly criminal and dangerous. O thou who hast the key of David, who openeth, and no man shutteth, exert in me the same efficacious power, and from this moment let my heart be opened to thee!

If, indeed, your heart has thus received the word, it will work in you effectually, as he does in all who believe; it will produce a happy and holy change in your sentiments, principles, and views, hearts and lives; it will be, as our Lord speaks, like the lump of leaven hid in the meal; it will gradually leaven the whole mass; it will in some measure sanctify all the faculties of the soul, and all the members

of the body. O that this holy word may dwell in us richly more and more, that "we may obey from the heart that form (or mould) of doctrine into which we have been delivered!"

PRAYER.—God of all grace, who, in ancient times, didst, by the power of the Holy Spirit, open the heart of Lydia to receive the word preached by thy faithful apostle Paul, grant that, by the same gentle and divine influence, our hearts, which, by reason of our depraved nature, are shut against thy Gospel, may be prepared, disposed, and enabled to receive the truth as it is in Jesus. We thank thee, O God, that unto us is the word of this salvation sent. Thou hast showed thy word unto Britain,—thy judgments unto England. Thou hast not dealt so with every nation. We praise thee, O Lord!—and being thus highly favored, may we regard the gospel message with the most candid, serious, devout, diligent, believing, joyful, and practical attention; lay it up in our hearts, and practise it in our lives, that so, like Lydia, we may prove ourselves faithful to the Lord, openly espouse his cause, and encourage his ministers, and with our whole household serve the Lord. Bestow upon us this grace, we humbly beseech thee, for the Redeemer's sake! Amen.

SERMON LVI.

THE ENMITY OF THE CARNAL MIND AGAINST GOD.

Romans viii. 7. The carnal mind is enmity against God.

THAT the whole human race is deplorably depraved, is a general doctrine of the Bible; and that the mind of man being thus depraved is in a state of opposition to God, is the particular doctrine of the text. A doctrine, indeed, not very palatable to men in general, but absolutely necessary to be known, if we would avoid the dreadful consequences of that opposition: for, as the apostle asserts, in the verse before the text—"to be carnally-minded is death"—everlasting death and destruction: whoever lives and dies under the power of a carnal mind, must eternally perish. Now, our text accounts for this; it shows the justice of this awful sentence, "because the carnal mind is enmity against God,"—it stands in direct opposition to him, to his perfections, his government, and his whole will; it is not only an *enemy* to him, but absolutely *enmity* itself; and such is its desperate malignity, its irreconcilable hatred, that it cannot be brought into subjection; the heart itself must be renewed by Almighty grace, before it can be reconciled, or brought over to God.

This is a true but awful picture of man. How different is it from that picture which man draws of himself! For fallen man is proud, and vain, and very desirous of justifying himself: he cannot, indeed, say that all is right; he is obliged to own that he sometimes does wrong; but he seems to think it rather accidental than natural. He will allow that he has his frailties and failings, yet maintains that he has a good heart, and sincerely endeavors to do his best. Now it is necessary that these mistakes should be corrected; and that we should trace the streams of vice to their fountain-head; which fountain-head you have in the text, "the carnal mind"—a mind wholly fleshly and worldly, delighting only in earthly things, and therefore averse to God, and entirely destitute of love to him. This is the subject before us; a subject which may be considered as essential to the very basis and groundwork of all true and vital religion. May the Holy Spirit, who alone truly convinceth of sin, and leadeth to repentance, enlighten and impress our hearts, while we show,

1. That the mind of man is indeed *carnal*; and

2. That, being carnal, it is in a *state of enmity against God*.

1. The mind of man is *carnal*—The mind of *every* man in a state of nature.

By the word *mind*—we are to understand all the powers of the soul; such as the understanding, the will, and the affections; or as it is expressed by our reformers in the 9th article, "this infection of nature (called in Greek *phronema sarkos*) which some do expound the *wisdom*, some the *sensuality*, some the *affection*, some the *desire* of the flesh, is not subject to the law of God."

The mind of man is here called *carnal*, that is *fleshly*, because its desires and delights are fleshly. The apostle, in this chapter, divides all mankind into two classes, ver. 5. "They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh: but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit." Our Savior himself makes the very same distinction, John iii. "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The natural man is so entirely a stranger to every thing spiritual, and so completely devoted to the pursuit of worldly and sensual objects, that he is called in Scripture *flesh*. Man is indeed composed of two parts, flesh and spirit; but because his spirit is dead to God, and he lives only an animal life, he is very justly called *flesh*.

So God said of the whole human race before the flood. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man," namely, by the preaching of Noah, "for that he also is *flesh*," that is, entirely corrupt and sensual; and this is the state of every man in the world, unless he be born again of the Spirit of God.

The *understanding* of man, however rational, is carnal; for this description belongs not only to the swinish sensualist, who wallows in the filth of grosser vices; but it is applicable to the most learned and intelligent person in the world, who is destitute of divine teaching. Hence we read, Coloss. ii. 18, of the zealous Jewish teacher, or acute Gentile philosopher, who is "vainly puffed up by his *fleshly mind*;" and, indeed, the human mind is never more carnal, than when swelled with self-conceit and proud reasonings opposed to the word of God.

The mind of man is remarkably carnal in its conceptions of the Divine Being, of his worship, and of the way of acceptance with him. Millions of men are, to this day, so grossly carnal, "that they change the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." Yea, there are millions of men, called Christians, who bow down to a crucifix, and to images of the Virgin Mary, and dead saints, and pray to them for deliverance. Even among ourselves, how many act as if God were a being like to themselves, and hypocritically worship him with the body only, when their hearts are far from him! All this is carnal.

How carnal are the ideas of many persons respecting the holy law of God contained in the ten commandments! This law is "*spiritual*," and requires the love and obedience of the heart: it forbids and condemns the first motions of sin in the thoughts; but many fancy themselves very good, and fulfillers of the law, because they have not committed the acts of murder, adultery, theft, &c. though they have broken the law in the thoughts and wishes of their hearts, thousands and thousands of times.

The carnal mind mistakes the *Gospel* also, as well as the law. The Gospel signifies *good news*; good news of the love of God to helpless sinners; good news of the atonement made by the blood of Christ; good news of free pardon, holiness, and eternal life, to be had, gratis, by all who seek them through faith in Christ! But how carnal are the views of many concerning it! Some understand, by the Gos-

pel, nothing but the history of Jesus Christ, his birth, miracles, death, &c. Others think the Gospel only a set of good precepts, given by Jesus Christ, showing us how we may make ourselves good, and save ourselves by so doing. Others, even some very learned men, tell us it is a kind of new law, offering us salvation on easier terms than the old law, namely, on the condition of faith, repentance, and sincere obedience. But all this is a false and carnal way of thinking about the Gospel; and fully proves the truth of what St. Paul says, 1 Cor. ii. 14. "The natural man (that is the carnal man) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are *foolishness* to him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." This is precisely true. Many hear the truths of the Gospel plainly preached for several years together, and never understand one of them. To many others, the great doctrines of grace, faith, righteousness, holiness, and the influence of the Spirit, seem nothing but nonsense, and they revile them accordingly. And the apostles say, it cannot be otherwise, "for they are *spiritually discerned*"—they are perceived, in their divine truth and glory, only by an understanding enlightened by the Spirit of God.

The *will* of the natural man is also *carnal*. The will is that power of the mind by which a person chooses any thing. Now the will of fallen man is perverse, obstinate, and rebellious, "it is not subject to the law of God." It does not choose those things which are truly good and excellent, but rejects them with disdain; while it chooses those things which are carnal and hurtful; things forbidden by the word of God, and evidently destructive to the souls of men. "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life," said Christ to the Jews: "we will not have him to reign over us," say many still.

The *affections* of the soul, such as hope, desire, and love, are also carnal; and this is the principal design of the word *mind* in our text—"they that are after the flesh do *mind* the things of the flesh"—they prefer and pursue carnal and animal gratifications. "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, wherewithal shall we be clothed?" These are the inquiries of carnal persons: not, what shall I do to be saved? not, how shall I please and glorify God? no, the world and the flesh are the idols set up in the heart, and to these they bow down. The service of God has no attractions for them. "What is the Almighty, say they, that we should serve

him, and what profit shall we have, if we pray unto him?" but how eagerly do they pursue worldly pleasures and profits! How violently are many set upon the gratification of their appetites, in drunkenness and lewdness! Such is the strength of their carnal propensities, that they break down all fences, human and divine. Lust must and will be gratified, in opposition to reason and religion, and at the risk of reputation, health, fortune, and life itself. What will not poor carnal sinners sacrifice for a little brutish short-lived indulgence? How strong is the love of pleasure, amusement, and vain company! How attached are many to show and appearance! while others are more soberly bent upon ruin, by the excessive love of money; determined, at any rate, to be rich: gold is their god; and to this they sacrifice their time, their talents, their strength, yea, their very souls. Thus, the world, in some form or other, is the supreme object of a carnal man; he "loves the world, and the things of the world," and, consequently, "the love of the Father is not in him."—Now this disposition is so exactly the reverse of what it ought to be; it so entirely opposes the holy will of God concerning his creatures, that he accounts it hatred and enmity against himself; and this leads us to a second part of our subject, which was to show,

2. That man, being carnal, is in a *state of enmity* against God. So God accounts it, and "we are sure that his judgment is according to truth." Indeed, this is the very essence of sin, the sinfulness of sin; the transferring that love, which on all accounts is due to the blessed God, as the most amiable of all beings, to his creatures; to objects, infinitely vile and base in comparison of him. It is turning our back upon him in contempt and scorn, as if he, whom angels adore, was not worthy of our notice. This conduct must surely be sinful in the highest degree, for, "guilt necessarily arises in proportion to the baseness of the offender, and the dignity of the person offended. An insulting behavior to a servant is a fault, to a magistrate it is a crime, to a king it is treason." What then is it to God,—the benefactor, the ruler, the Father of men? To forsake him, to take part against holiness and godliness, in which he delights, is to become a rebel and "a hater of God;" this is enmity against God; and this is the temper of all unconverted sinners.

Let us give some instances of this, in the dislike which carnal men discover to the *perfections* of God—to the *worship* of

God—to the *laws* of God, and to the *people* of God.

The carnal man takes no pleasure in the *perfections* of God; he *thinks* that God is altogether like himself, or rather *wishes* that he were so. That glorious attribute, *holiness*, is peculiarly obnoxious to him; he cannot bear to think that God is so strict and severe as to hate and punish every sin, but would reduce him to his own standard.—The *justice* of God he opposes and denies, and will by no means believe that he will eternally punish sin, although he has solemnly declared that he will: consequently, the sinner denies the *truth* of God. If Jehovah say, “in the day thou eatest, thou shalt surely die,” the carnal mind, tutored by Satan, says, “I shall not surely die,” but shall be wiser and happier by my sins. True holiness consists in the restoration of the divine image in the soul; but the carnal mind turns with disgust from God, and desires not to imitate his perfections.

The carnal mind greatly dislikes the spiritual *worship* of God. That which constitutes the joy of holy angels and redeemed sinners, is an intolerable burden, and therefore wholly omitted, or very carelessly performed. Some scruple not to ridicule the joys of glorified saints, as if it were only “sitting on the bare clouds, and continually, singing psalms;” and they will own they can conceive of no heaven superior to the pleasures of the tavern and the brothel. If such persons drag themselves to the church, their wandering eyes, their trifling and irreverent conduct, prove that their hearts are not there: and the man that can easily support the fatigue of a hot and crowded play-house for four or five hours, is extremely tired with an hour and a half in the house of God. See him engaged in the amusements of the chase, the card-table, the race-ground, or the play-house, and his eyes sparkle with delight; he anticipates the pleasure before it arrives, and he talks of it with raptures when it is past. But, at church, he is listless, and supine; he gapes or sleeps; and no part of the service affords a moment's pleasure but the words of dismissal. Thus he serves his God; in a way that he would be ashamed to serve a fellow-worm; and he springs from the church, like a bird from the cage, glad that his confinement is over, and that worldly conversation, his repast, or some other amusement, may better occupy his carnal mind.

As to *private* devotion, he knows little or nothing of it. It is, perhaps, wholly omitted for years together; or when con-

science and fear make him drop on his knees, the irksome task is soon dispatched. He has no communion with God, nor does he conceive that it would afford him any delight.

Our text instances the enmity of the carnal mind in its opposition to the *law of God*—“it is not subject to the law of God.” The law of God is holy, and just, and good; it requires only that we should love him supremely, and our neighbor disinterestedly. God certainly has a right to require this; and it is our most reasonable service; but the carnal mind refuses submission. “Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?” is the language of every sinner, as well as of Pharaoh. “His yoke is easy, and his burden is light;” but, as the prophet says, “they pull away the shoulder, they stop their ears that they should not hear.” They consider the law of God, as a hard restraint upon their vicious and corrupt inclinations, their worldly interests and sensual pleasures.

Nor is the enmity of the carnal mind against the *Gospel* less than that against the law. The Gospel is a glorious dispensation of grace and mercy towards ruined sinners, in which infinite wisdom, justice, holiness and mercy are sweetly united: a system every way honorable to God and suitable to man, and therefore worthy of all acceptance. But the carnal mind opposes even this. The proud pharisee disdains to submit to the righteousness of Christ; the carnal worldling, intent upon his land, his oxen, and his farm, begs to be excused: the vain philosopher, puffed up with his mental acquirements, cavils at all its humbling doctrines; and thus, all agree to reject the council of God against themselves.

The carnal mind betrays its inward enmity against God by a settled contempt and hatred against his *people*. God *has* a people in the world, “called, chosen, and faithful:” they are a separate people; and distinguished by their attachment to his word and ways. This very circumstance renders them obnoxious to carnal men; for “they that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” Now the carnal mind is the very principle of persecution. This has been the source of opposition to the church of God in all ages, from the time of righteous Abel to the present moment; but we are not to be offended at this. Our Lord has said, “Marvel not that the world hate you; it hated me before it hated you.” Let this reconcile the people of God to the cross.

Thus have we briefly described the car-

nal mind, and shown its enmity against God. But what words can paint its criminality and vileness? What can be said of it, equal in force to what the apostle says in the text—"it is not subject to the law of God, *neither indeed can be*;" it *cannot* be subject; it is not the nature of the carnal mind to submit to God; it is as contrary to it, as light is to darkness. An enemy may be reconciled, but enmity cannot. Nothing can remove it but the divine power of renewing grace, bestowing a spiritual mind upon us.

ADDRESS.

My friends! If the mind of man be thus carnal, and the carnal mind be thus inimical to God, it is a matter of the most serious consideration, whether we are now under the power of it, or happily delivered by grace. Such as the *mind* is, such will the walk and conversation be. Review the particulars before-mentioned, and strictly inquire how it is with you. The decision is of the utmost consequence, for "they who are in the flesh cannot please God," ver. 8; but, on the contrary, are under his dreadful displeasure, and liable to his eternal wrath; for "If we live after the flesh, we shall die."

What need then of humiliation! How ill does it become a fallen creature, with a heart so carnal, to boast of its excellence; and call that a *good heart*, which the Scripture pronounces to be carnal, and enmity against God. Surely, instead of boasting, the deepest sorrow and shame become us. We should abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes; for what can be so vile and abominable as this carnal disposition? This is the true source of all our sinful actions: for the carnal walk is produced by the carnal mind; and even they, who may not be chargeable with gross immoralities, may have reason to charge themselves with this horrid temper; and if any are disposed to deny that they are carnally-minded, the denial itself proves beyond a doubt that they are altogether carnal. For even the best of men, the most wise, holy and pious, are conscious of the remains of this wretched temper. "This infection of nature (say our reformers) doth remain even in them that are regenerate;" and St. Paul affirms, that the flesh lusteth against the spirit. Yea, he says of himself, in a comparative view, "the law is spiritual, but I am carnal." Rom. vii. 14. "Go," said a modern writer, "go with the serious Christian into his closet, ask him *his* opinion of the corruption of the heart, and he will tell you

that he is deeply sensible of its power; for he has learned it from much self-observation, and long acquaintance with the workings of his own mind. He will tell you that every day strengthens this conviction; yea, that hourly he sees fresh reason to deplore his want of simplicity in intention, his infirmity of purpose, his low views, his selfish unworthy desires, his backwardness to set about his duty, his languor and coldness in performing it; that he finds himself obliged continually to confess, that he feels within him two opposite principles, and that "he cannot do the things that he would."

This true humiliation of spirit will render the blessings of the Gospel very precious. The consciousness of so much evil, not only in the life but in the heart, will oblige us to seek for pardoning mercy, through faith in the Redeemer; and that blood will appear to us invaluablely precious, which can, and does, cleanse us from so much sin. The Love of God will appear, as it is, inexpressibly wonderful, when fixed upon creatures so destitute of every thing meritorious; and the grateful language of the saved sinner will be, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?" Are we conscious that "whereas we were once blind, now we see;" that we can sincerely delight in the perfections of God, in the worship of God, in the law of God, and in the people of God? O let the pleasing change be reviewed with thankfulness, and the glory ascribed, where alone it is due, to the God of all grace; and be it our daily concern to "walk in the Spirit," and to bring forth "the fruits of the Spirit, in all righteousness and goodness."

There is one other truth fairly deducible from what has been said of the carnal mind, and that is—the *necessity of regeneration*, or the new birth. For this we have the highest authority. Our Savior saith, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God:" and when this doctrine was objected to by the carnal mind of Nicodemus, (and carnal minds always object to it) our Lord confirmed the truth of it, by assigning this reason for its necessity—"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit;" which shows (as Mr. Burkit observes) "that as original corruption is conveyed by natural generation, so a saving generation is the effect and product of the Holy Spirit's operation." "Can the Ethiopian change his skin," saith the prophet, "or the leopard his spots? then may ye

also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Here the difficulty mentioned is only that of breaking off a habit or custom which is reckoned a *second nature*; but how much greater must be the difficulty of altering a nature itself, a carnal nature, a carnal mind, the nature of which is enmity against God! Surely the power of almighty God is necessary here, even that same power which said, "Let there be light, and there was light." O that this new creating power may be graciously displayed in changing the carnal into the spiritual mind: for "to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

PRAYER.—HOLY, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, against whom we have greatly sinned, and who for our sins art most justly displeased! Thou hast revealed thy wrath from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; and thou hast declared that except we repent, we shall all perish. Grant unto us, O Lord, we beseech thee, repentance unto salvation. We confess before thee, not only our actual transgressions, but the sinfulness of our hearts, from which they flowed. Our minds are, indeed, by nature, miserably carnal, minding only the things of the flesh;—our understanding is carnal, ignorant of the things of the Spirit;—our will is carnal, opposed to thy will, and not subject to thy law; and our affections are carnal,—being set only upon worldly objects and enjoyments; and we confess with shame and grief that this carnal mind is enmity against thee,—against thy glorious perfections, thy spiritual worship, thy holy laws, and thy redeemed people; but suffer none of us, O God, to remain under the power and curse of such a carnal mind. May we all be born again,—born of the Spirit, that we may possess a spiritual mind, and regard the things of the Spirit; and may we now so sow unto the Spirit, that we may finally of the Spirit reap life everlasting, through the merits and intercession of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior! Amen.

SERMON LVII.

MARTHA AND MARY; OR, THE ONE THING NEEDFUL.

Luke x. 41, 42. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

OUR adorable Savior, whose gracious employment it was to go about doing good, was pleased, in one of his journeys, to call at a friend's house in Bethany, a little village about two miles from Jerusalem. There dwelt, in one happy house, Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and Mary; all pious persons, and humble disciples of the

blessed Jesus. Martha was probably the housekeeper, for it is said, ver. 38, that "she received him into her house." He, who was the Maker of all, and the Lord of all, was for our sake so poor, that he had not a place where to lay his head, no house of his own; but, here and there, a pious person was found, who thought it the highest honor to entertain him. In a spiritual sense, Jesus still stands at the door of our house, of our hearts, and knocks for admittance. O that we may open our hearts, and most cordially receive the heavenly guest!

No sooner was he seated, than he began to instruct the family in divine things: thus should we thankfully embrace every fit opportunity of discoursing on subjects which belong to our peace. Let religion have a place in the parlor, as well as in the church.

When this heavenly Teacher opened his mouth, the domestic circle was all attention; so much is signified by the expression, "*Mary sat at Jesus' feet*, and heard his word." An humble heart and an humble posture well become the disciples of Christ, when they hear his word. When Christ began his discourse, Martha, as well as Mary, was diligently attentive; for it is said—"she had a sister, who *also* sat at his feet." But, as some attention from the mistress of the house was necessary to procure refreshment for the numerous guests, (for there must have been thirteen in number if all the apostles were there,) Martha, who appears to have been of an active turn, left the room to superintend the business of the kitchen. She denied herself the pleasure of continuing to regard his charming discourse, for the purpose of making an abundant preparation for our Lord and his friends; a preparation, it should seem, far greater than was necessary. Finding this care and labor too much for her strength and spirits, she returns to the room to complain of her sister; she came to Jesus, and said, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me."

While we must commend the hospitality and generosity of Martha, in wishing to entertain her guests in a liberal manner, we cannot but observe something blamable in this application. She had certainly lost her temper, and was improperly angry with her sister. She should have made some allowance for the pious zeal of Mary, who was too deeply engaged in listening to Jesus, to recollect the affairs of the house. If her help was necessary, Martha

might have beckoned her out, or whispered the request in her ear. But it was still more blamable to insinuate a degree of censure on our Lord himself, as if he were to blame for detaining her. "Dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?" This was very indecent, and disrespectful. If she thought it wrong that her younger sister should indulge her ease, while she was so hard at work, yet why was the Lord to be censured, as if he were the cause of it? But, while we detect this infirmity of Martha, let us correct the same fault in ourselves. We are too apt to lose our composure in a hurry of worldly business; too apt to find fault with our fellow-Christians, when they do not come up to our standard; and, what is much worse, to murmur at cross providences, and quarrel with heaven itself. For this is sometimes the language of our dissatisfaction—"Lord, dost thou not care that I am so ill, so perplexed, so persecuted, so deserted, so helpless?" O let us beware of this temper, and we shall be angry with ourselves, rather than with Martha.

As this question was proposed to our Lord himself, he is pleased to answer it. Mary, who was blamed, remains silent: she leaves her defence to an abler advocate. Jesus kindly passes over the censure which was aimed at himself, but fully vindicates Mary's conduct; while he tenderly reproves Martha for her extreme anxiety.

Our Lord well knew the state of her mind—"she was *cumbered* about *much serving*"—anxious to make a great entertainment, and to have every thing in exact order; she was *cumbered* about this; almost *distracted* with the hurry and bustle it occasioned in the family. This was no doubt out of respect to her much-esteemed visitor; yet probably there was a little mixture of pride in the business; a wish to set off the whole to the best advantage, as is too common, even with good people, on such occasions, whereby the spiritual comfort, both of the hostess and the guests, is often diminished. Jesus therefore gave her a gentle rebuke. "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things." He was no doubt pleased with her good intention to entertain him; but he was not pleased at her making a great feast, as if he took delight in a sumptuous table. He did not covet delicacies; nor is he pleased with the luxury of his professing people; nor with the great expense and great trouble which a splendid entertainment requires. He would have

been more satisfied with seeing Martha sitting with Mary to hear his instructions; "he was better pleased to see Mary in the chapel, than Martha in the kitchen."

That which most displeased him was, that her attention to *many things* obliged her, for the present, to neglect the *one thing*, that which was the great thing he came to her house for, namely, to teach and instruct the family; and this was "the one thing" to which Mary wisely confined her attention. When, therefore, he blames Martha for too much regarding many *worldly* things, he commends Mary for regarding that one *spiritual* thing, the care of her soul, by improving the present opportunity of enjoying his instruction. "One thing," said he, "is *needful*"—is absolutely necessary, indispensably necessary; and consequently all other things must give place to it. He therefore adds—"and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her;" as if he had said, Your dear sister has such a just and affecting sense of the infinite value of her immortal soul, and so earnest a desire of improving the present opportunity of becoming wise to salvation, that she has judiciously given the preference to my company; and in doing this she has chosen the good portion, and secured a blessing that she shall never lose.

Thus Martha was reprov'd, and Mary commended. It must have been a great disappointment to the former; she expected a different kind of answer: but Christ is faithful; and "whom he loveth he chasteneth." It was because he loved her, that he rebuked her; and, as she was truly a pious woman, no doubt she profited by the reproof, and loved him for it more than ever.

There is much solid instruction to be derived from this little history. The blamable anxiety of Martha, and the pious devotion of Mary, gave occasion for our Lord's delivering one of the most weighty sayings that words can possibly express; a saying worthy to be written in letters of gold; a saying worthy to be affixed in every church, in every house, in every heart. May the finger of God inscribe it on our inmost souls!

ONE THING IS NEEDFUL!

For our further instruction from this pleasing and most interesting passage, it may be proper to observe the three following truths:

1. The care of the soul is the one thing needful:

2. The cares of the world greatly obstruct this religious care.

3. Truly religious persons possess a portion which they shall never lose.

We are first to observe that *the care of the soul* is the one thing needful: it is the religious care of the soul that our Lord here intends, as appears from his opposing Mary's care to Martha's cares: she cared for *many* things; Mary for *one*; and she manifested this care by a studious attention to every word that dropped from his lips. But this short sentence comprehends a great deal.

The care of the soul implies a consideration of its infinite value and importance, as immortal. According to our Savior's words in another place, "what is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

The care of the soul includes the diligent use of all those means which God has appointed for its salvation; the first of which is, a due regard to the word of God. Thus Mary proved her care; and thus must we. It is true, we have not now the bodily presence of this great teacher, yet we have his word; we have that Gospel, which he ordered to be preached to all nations, and which he promised to sanction with his spiritual presence to the end of the world. This Gospel is able to make us "wise to salvation;" and it is his "power to salvation." Those, therefore, are most like Mary, who pay the most diligent regard to his word both in public and private.

Prayer also is a necessary branch of this religious care. That person cannot have much concern for his soul, who neglects this duty: but he who knows and feels that he is a miserable sinner, will most gladly apply to the throne of grace for mercy. This will be the daily business of every one who has a due concern for his soul. "Behold, he prayeth!"

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is also the proper effect of this care. The word of God everywhere directs the sinner to Jesus, as the only deliverer from the wrath to come; so when the jailer evinced a concern for his soul, by crying, "what shall I do to be saved?" the apostle immediately replied—"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." This is indeed the one thing needful. All our religious cares meet in this point; for there is no name under heaven, whereby we must be saved, but the precious name of Jesus; the soul, therefore, that is taught of God, rests in nothing short of this; as it is writ-

ten, "every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me;" and, blessed be his dear name, it is added, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." The person that is duly concerned for his soul wants those blessings, which are only to be found in Jesus; and here they are all ready for him. Jesus is our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and redemption; every thing needful to make a poor sinner rich, and a miserable sinner happy. Yes: Jesus Christ is all, and in all.

The care of the soul will influence the whole conduct of a believer; he cannot live at large as other men do. The fear of the Lord is in his soul. The love of God is shed abroad in his heart. The commandments of God are written upon his mind. Sin therefore becomes his aversion, holiness his delight, religion his element, the people of God his companions, and heaven the prize at which he aims.

Take these thoughts and put them together: you will then surely admit that this religious concern is the one thing needful. It must be so, if the soul itself be of any value; if it be immortal; if it must exist for ever, either in bliss or woe. Is there a state of everlasting misery for impenitent sinners? The God of truth declares there is. He who spake the words of our text to Martha, speaks also of the day of judgment, when he will say to the wicked, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Now, if we believe this, we shall fly from the wrath to come; it will be the first concern of our souls to avoid eternal torments. What can be so dreadful as hell? What can be so necessary as to escape it?

Is there, on the other hand, a state of complete and everlasting happiness in heaven? Will Christ say to his people, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world?" And is it certain that the true Christian shall enjoy the presence and glory of the Redeemer to all eternity? Surely, then, that religious care which he has made necessary to the attainment of this happiness, must be the one thing needful. What if Martha's cares would procure mines of silver, crowns of gold, sceptres, jewels, and kingdoms, in all their rich abundance; what are these compared to the glorious blessedness of saved sinners, connected with Mary's solicitude for the one thing needful?

But, besides these important concerns of futurity, religion is the one thing need-

ful, even *now*. Godliness hath the promise of the present life, as well as of that to come. How many snares are avoided! how many mischiefs are prevented! how much solid peace of mind procured, by the truly religious person! What happy individuals, what happy families, happy towns, and happy kingdoms, would there be, if the blessed religion of the Gospel prevailed in all its beauty and power! This then is the great concern, this the first business, the chief end of man. Compared with this, the most important affairs of the greatest empires are trifles light as air. "Vanity of vanities, said the royal preacher, all is vanity and vexation of spirit;" but he adds, as the conclusion of all his pursuits and discoveries—"Fear God, and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man; or, as it is expressed in a similar passage, and with the like solemnity—"Behold! the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, is understanding."

If then we give credit to the testimony of wise and good men, to the testimony of God throughout the Scriptures, or to the testimony of our divine Savior in the text, we are obliged to assent to the important maxim—The care of the soul is the one thing needful. And if it be so, we must stop and inquire, how it comes to pass, that so few persons make it any part of their care, very few indeed their first and principal care! How can we account for this? Probably it is not because they are not convinced of the truth, for there are serious moments in which the most careless sinners admit it; but it is to be accounted for in the prevalence of worldly cares, which, for want of faith in the reality of eternal things, press upon them so closely, that, like Martha, they are careful, and cumbered, and troubled, to the great neglect of the chief concern. And this leads us, in the second place, to observe, that,

2. The cares of the world greatly obstruct this religious care. The case of Martha is a proof of this. She was blamable; yet not half so blamable as many are; for her cares were all directed to the accommodation of the Lord Jesus and his friends; but our cares have commonly our own interest and comfort only in view.

It may be said here, Are not worldly cares necessary? Must we shut up ourselves in a cell, and do nothing but say our prayers? We readily admit that worldly cares, in their proper place and proportion, are unavoidable, are absolutely necessary. We have bodies as well as

souls: these must be provided for; and, to make this provision, care and labor are necessary. Religion was never designed to make us idle—and St. Paul directs, that if any man will not work, he shall not eat. Every person, therefore, in his own station, has his own proper care; the servant; the master; the tradesman; the housekeeper; the magistrate. And the same apostle says—"If any provide not for his own, (his own relations) and especially for those of his own house, (his family) he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (1 Tim. v. 8.) It is not therefore against the necessary cares attached to our several stations in life that we speak, but against the *excessive degree* of them, against that degree of them, which hinders and obstructs the superior care of the soul. And here lies the danger of the more moral and virtuous part of mankind; for we do not now speak of persons who live in known and wilful sins, such as drunkenness, whoredom, profaneness, or any other gross vice; these abominations most evidently war against the soul, and must end in its everlasting ruin. Our business now is with the sober and decent members of society, who may be just, and honest, and useful in their places; and whose diligence and industry recommend them to their fellow-creatures. We are willing to give due honor to such characters; but must be permitted to urge upon them, in the most serious and solemn manner, the great danger of everlasting ruin and perdition by the love of the world;—a thing not less ruinous and destructive to the souls of men, than the most flagrant and disgraceful vices.

For this alarming assertion we have no less authority than that of St. John—"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John ii. 15. Let it also be remembered, what it was that excluded the numerous persons invited to the Gospel-feast, Luke xiv. 16; it was the love of the world; it was the undue love of lawful things—"they all began to make excuse," and all their excuses were their care and trouble about many things, to the neglect of the one thing needful. But the master of the feast protested—"None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." In like manner, a very promising young gentleman, who addressed our Lord with great respect, and proposed to become one of his disciples, was for ever separated from him by the love of the

world; he left him very sorrowful, for he was very rich. But we must proceed in the last place, to show, that,

3. Truly religious persons possess a portion which they shall never lose. "*Mary*," said our Lord, "*hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken from her.*" The part which she chose was to sit at the feet of Jesus, and receive in faith his divine instructions. This was a good part, the advantage of which she never lost. The reputation which Martha acquired as a generous hostess was soon gone; but Mary's honor continues to this moment.

In like manner a truly religious person, one who is renewed by the Spirit of God, is an humble learner at the feet of Christ, who still teaches his church by his word and Spirit; one who accepts the Lord's gracious invitation "Learn of me"—be my scholar, be my disciple; become wise to salvation by my sacred Gospel, for "ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

The Gospel presents to the enlightened mind a part, or portion, which the soul deliberately chooses in preference to the whole world. An interest in Christ and union to him enriches the soul with all the infinite blessings of grace and glory. The complete pardon of sin—the perfect justification and acceptance of his person—the unspeakable felicity of peace with God—the most cordial reception into his dear family—the most friendly intercourse and communion with him—the consolations of his Holy Spirit—and certain protection from final apostasy—are among the invaluable privileges of a believer in the present world, and surely they deserve the title of the good part; but even these, good and great as they are, are comparatively small, when we take a glance by faith into the unseen and eternal world. Who can tell what is reserved in heaven, as yet unrevealed, for the heirs of glory? "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Those who have now a part with Christ in his grace, shall have a part with Christ in his glory; those who are partakers with Christ in his sufferings, shall be partakers with him in his joys and honors to all eternity.

This then is the good part, intrinsically good, eminently good; and what renders it incomparably good is, its duration; it shall not be taken away. This is more than we can say of any earthly possession. Whatever good it may be, it partakes of that vanity and uncertainty which is in-

separable from the present state of things. Pleasures perish in the using. Honor is a momentary bubble. Riches make themselves wings and fly away. Life itself is a transient vapor. What then is durable? Nothing, nothing but this good part. This shall abide, when the earth itself is dissolved, and the elements melt with fervent heat. It shall not be taken away. God, who bestow'd it, will not take it away, for his gifts and callings are without repentance: wicked men, though they should be permitted to persecute, cannot take it away. Satan, with all his wiles and devices, shall not take it away. No; we are persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor devils, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

In this discourse, religion is brought to a point. Here is nothing to distract your attention. Here is a weighty sentence, uttered by the lips of eternal wisdom—*One thing is needful*—one thing, observe; and that one thing is *religion*, or the care of the soul.

So Jesus Christ says. What do you say? Are you of his mind? do you coincide with him, or totally differ? Say now, honestly,—Is religion the one thing needful with you? Is it so in your settled judgment? Is it so in your daily practice? Or is it quite the reverse? Not the *one* thing. Not *any* thing. Not at all the object of serious attention, of desire, of delight. How *many* things engage your thoughts, and divide your affections? But you cannot say they shall not be taken away from you. Even now, they cannot satisfy you. What will they do for you in the hour of death? You know they must fail you then, if not before. O be wise! Be wise now. Defer not a concern so great, so vast, so important. Your eternal happiness perhaps depends on the decision which your mind shall form this moment. God help you to choose aright! You may never have a clearer or stronger conviction than you have at this moment, that religion is the all-important concern. May divine grace enable you to say—By the help of God, this is the good part which I solemnly choose. Too long I have basely neglected it, but henceforth it shall be my business, my delight, my portion. Heaven and earth say—Amen!

Who can look abroad into the vain and wicked world without an aching heart? How few are there who account religion the one thing needful! How many are

there with whom it is *the one thing need- less*; the only thing neglected and des- pised! But let us take pains to rouse the attention of thoughtless mortals to this great concern. They must regard it, or perish. Have we a relation or a friend living without God in the world? O let us tell him, by some means or other, that one thing is needful; that Jesus Christ says so; that all good men say so; that even bad men, when they come to die, say so too. O that we might be the happy instru- ments of turning him to righteousness!

What a shield does this text afford us, against all the arrows of censure and ridi- cule that a vain and thoughtless world may hurl against us! Let them call our serious regard to religion fanaticism; let them treat us as enthusiasts or madmen. It is of no consequence at all. We know that *we* are right, and *they* are wrong. We will never blush at the charge of being reli- gious, while the glorious Teacher and Judge of the world is on our side, and says—One thing is needful.

Have we chosen the good part? Who hath made us to differ from those who re- ject it? This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. To sovereign, distinguishing, almighty grace, be all the glory and all the praise! We give him the glory; he permits us to take the joy. And have I indeed chosen the good part? and shall it never be taken away? Is all safe for eternity? Is Jesus mine, and Heaven mine? O Christian, happy art thou. Envy not the gayest and the rich- est of the world; be content with thy bet- ter portion; rejoice; be thankful and live to God.

PRAYER.—BLESSED God, thou, who didst make man, best knowest what is good for man; and thou hast, in great mercy, made it known to us. Thou hast shown us, in thy word, what is the one thing needful, even the care of the soul, with a view to its eternal salvation. O help us practically to regard this! Let not the cares of this world, however necessary, nor its pleasures, however lawful, prevent our first and chief re- gard to religion; but may we, like Mary, who sat at our Savior's feet, pay the most diligent at- tention to the word of salvation in the Gospel! May we hear it with reverence,—read it with seriousness,—be instant in prayer; and, above all, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone is able to save us from our sins. We rejoice to think that the good part shall never be taken away from those who have, by thy grace, been enabled to choose it. Worldly pleasures perish in the using,—health, wealth, honor, and life it- self, are transitory; but nothing shall separate be- lievers from the love of God, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Having this portion, we will not envy sinners,—we will not blush at being thought reli- gious; but glory in our choice, while we ascribe all honor to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the God of our salvation. Amen.

SERMON LVIII.

RELIGION, OR RUIN.

Ezek. xviii. 30. So Iniquity shall not be your Ruin.

If we believe the Scriptures to be the word of God, we are bound to make our estimate of every religious subject from them; and in doing so we shall find a wonderful difference between the doctrines of God and the opinions of men. This difference will appear in a most striking manner on the subject of *SIN*: the repre- sentations which are made of it in the Bible are totally different from those which are made of it by sinners themselves. It is common for the latter to think and speak of sin as a light and trifling affair; it gives them no concern; it excites no alarm; they seek no remedy; but can make plausible excuses for it, turn it into a jest, and even glory in their shame. But if we consult the word of God, we shall find that sin is the worst of all evils: that it is extremely hateful to our Maker; extreme- ly prejudicial to ourselves; that it is the dreadful source of all the miseries we feel, and the procuring cause of sufferings un- speakable and eternal in the world to come. Look at sin in the flattering mirror that Satan and the world present to us, and it assumes the appearance of bewitch- ing pleasure, freedom, and advantage; but survey it in the faithful glass of the divine truth, and you behold an object deformed and lothesome; vile and base in itself, and full of unspeakable danger and mischief to the sinner. The text describes its ten- dency in one comprehensive word—*RUIN*—a word of tremendous import, even when applied to worldly concerns; it is to subvert, demolish, impoverish, and ut- terly destroy; applied to the soul, it is to demolish the image of God; it is to be- come miserably poor; it is to destroy all true happiness; and to insure a long eternity of inconceivable sorrows and suf- ferings.

But the text also opens to us a door of hope; while it points out the ruinous effect of sin; it offers the most gracious advice in order to our avoiding it; and this is the principal design of the Gospel; it is good news; information how we may be de- livered from eternal misery, and made partakers of everlasting life. There are two things therefore which now call for our serious attention.

1. Sin is certainly ruinous to the souls of men; and,

2. The Gospel directs us how to avoid the impending ruin.

We are first to prove, that "*Sin is cer-*

tainly ruinous to the souls of men."

"The wages of sin is death.—When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." By sin, we mean, any want of conformity to the law of God, or any transgression of it; not coming up to what it requires, or doing any thing that it forbids. God has an undoubted right to our obedience; he made us; he gave us all the powers we possess; he preserves us and provides for us, and bestows innumerable comforts upon us. How reasonable then is it, that we should obey his will, abstain from what would hurt us, and do the things which are pleasing and acceptable in his sight! But such is the perverseness of our hearts, that we refuse to do this. We set up our own carnal will as our law; and practically say, "Let us break his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from us."—"As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee: but we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth." "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?"

This is the daring language, this is the provoking practice of men in general. But is it not awfully criminal? Can we reasonably suppose that a God of unspotted holiness and purity will endure such conduct? Would the rulers of this world permit their subjects to disobey their laws with impunity? No: every human law has its proper *sanction*, or it would be merely a piece of advice, and not a law; and if the law be broken, punishment follows of course.

Even in private life, those very persons, who flatter themselves that God will not punish their sins, are frequently disposed severely to resent the little injuries done to themselves. The parent thinks it right to keep his child in subjection, and sometimes punish him for a fault. He is extremely angry with a negligent and undutiful servant, and perhaps dismisses him for a single failure in duty. If he be deceived and defrauded by a neighbor, he will withdraw his favors from him; and perhaps prosecute a thief even unto death, for the loss of a few shillings. A gentleman who piques himself upon his nice sense of honor, will probably kill his friend in a duel to obtain satisfaction: and yet, O strange inconsistency! these very persons will deny that the God of infinite justice means to take any notice of the numberless offences they have committed against him for many years together.

In human governments, when there is a conspiracy against the king or the state, the culprits are diligently sought for, and, when convicted, are punished with exemplary severity; and it is necessary that it should be so: but is rebellion against heaven the only innocent rebellion; is it a crime of the greatest magnitude to aim at dethroning an earthly monarch, and is it no harm to live a life of open rebellion against God; violating his laws, opposing his authority, submitting to another prince, and, as far as the sinner can, aiming to dethrone the eternal majesty?

The rebellion of a child against a parent is still more vile, as in the case of Absalom, who would have dethroned and murdered his indulgent father David. But this is a crime justly chargeable upon every sinner. Harken to the indictment, in the words of God himself. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me!" This crime, I say, is justly chargeable on each of us; we have united in the ingratitude of an undutiful child with the rebellion of a wicked subject; we have despised the laws of God; (some have taken pains to prove they are not his laws, but all fables and forgeries;) we have denied that God requires any submission: we have obeyed another prince, an usurper, even "the prince of the power of the air, which now worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience."

And shall we yet say, what harm have I done? We have insulted the God of heaven: we have abused his justice, as if he would not punish sin; we have abused his power, as if he could not punish it; we have abused his omniscience, as if he did not see our sin; we have abused his truth, as if he would belie himself; and we have abused his patience, which has borne so long with us; and shall we abuse him still further, by saying that all the following threatenings mean nothing at all?

Observe what he says, "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*" (Ezek. xviii. 4.) "*The wicked shall be turned into hell.*" (Psalm ix. 17.) "*Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.*" (James i. 15.) "*Fear him, who is able to cast both body and soul into hell;—where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*" (Matt. x. 28.) "*Every transgression and disobedience receiveth a just recompense of reward.*" (Heb. ii. 2.) "*He will render indignation, and wrath, tribulation, and anguish, upon every soul of man*

that doeth evil." (Rom. ii. 8, 9.) Now are all these dreadful threatenings nothing? Do they not prove that sin is certainly ruinous to the souls of men?

But as *general* threatenings do not affect so much as those *particular* ones which are denounced against particular sins, observe the following. What saith the holy God against the unclean sinner?—"Whoremongers and adulterers, God will judge; (Heb. xiii. 4.) and again "*Whoso committeth adultery destroyeth his own soul.*" (Prov. vi. 32.) What saith God to the drunkard? "*Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? They that tarry long at the wine, &c.—at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.*" (Prov. xxiii. 32.) What saith he to the swearer? "*God will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*" (Exod. xx. 7.) The like may be said of every one who lives in any other known sin; they are ruining themselves—they are *heaping up wrath against the day of wrath*; like a man building a pile on which to burn himself to death; every time a man commits a new sin, he is bringing another fagot to enlarge the heap and increase the flame.

Sin has already ruined its thousands, and its millions. When sin got into heaven, it ruined multitudes of angels, and pulled them down from their thrones into endless perdition. Sin ruined our first parents, and dragged them out of paradise into a wilderness of woe. Sin ruined the world of the ungodly, and brought a destructive deluge of wrath upon them all. Sin ruined Sodom and Gomorrah, and brought down showers of fire and brimstone upon them. Sin ruined the nation of Israel, by bringing Philistines and Assyrians upon them; and when they filled up the measure of their iniquity by the murder of the Son of God, it completely ruined them, both in church and state, and dispersed them among all nations, a standing monument of the ruinous nature of sin.

And, O! could we draw aside the veil, which conceals from our view the dire abode of damned spirits, where God's mercies are clean gone, and he will be favorable no more, what a terrific proof should we have of the truth of our text! one and all would say, "We are filled with the fruit of our own ways; we are reaping the wages of our own sins; O mortals, sin is indeed a ruinous thing!"

Yes! while we are sitting here at our ease, and calmly contemplating the evil of sin, they are shrieking aloud with insufferable torture; living, ever-living wit-

nesses of its awful evil. Methinks I hear one of them say, "Ah, indeed! sin has proved my ruin. Sabbath-breaking ruined me. I indulged my sloth—I kept open my shop for the paltry gain of a few shillings—I would have my pleasant walks and rides, and company—I deserted the house of God—neglected the salvation of my soul; and now I am ruined for ever.

Another cries, "Sensuality has destroyed me. My heart was full of uncleanness. I doted on the embraces of an harlot. I sacrificed, for the delights of a moment, the pleasures of an eternal world; and find by woful experience, that "her house is the way to death, her steps take hold on hell!"

Methinks the doleful lamentation of a third is to this effect. "I was a lover of that wretched world. Gold was my god. I would be rich at all events. I would have customers, and friends, and business, at any rate; I succeeded. I got a good trade, but I lost a good God. I got friends, but made Christ my enemy. I obtained money, but ruined my soul!" O sirs! there is not a miserable man or woman in hell who does not say—"Sin has been my ruin!"

Well then: will you take warning by their ruin, so as to avoid the same? Has not sin ruined souls enough already? Must *you*, who know all this, be added to the dreadful number? God forbid! O that there were a heart in you to say—"I see, I plainly see, that sin is a ruinous thing. It is of God's infinite mercy that it has not destroyed me long ago; and now I desire to forsake it, I desire to fly from the wrath to come; but whither must I fly? What must I do to escape this threatening ruin?"

To answer this important inquiry shall be our next business; for we proposed to show, in the second place, that,

2. The Gospel directs us how to avoid the impending ruin.

I say—The *Gospel* directs us how to avoid it; and nothing but the Gospel *can* do this. The light of nature could never have informed us upon what terms an offended God would be merciful, or whether he would be merciful at all. The law of God can do us good only by convincing and alarming our consciences, and exciting in us an earnest desire to flee from approaching wrath. But in the most interesting concern, the Gospel of Christ offers us the fullest satisfaction; and tells us, in three words, what must be done, that iniquity may not prove our ruin. We must "*believe*"—We must "*repent*"—We must "*lead a new life*."

1. We shall begin with "*faith*;" faith

in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Savior of the world. It was thus that St. Paul began with the trembling jailer at Philippi; when, apprehensive of immediate ruin, he cried aloud, in the consternation of his soul—"What must I do to be saved?" The servant of God directed his views to the only refuge for a sinner, even to Jesus, that benevolent friend of sinners, who came to "seek and to save that which was lost."

It was to prevent our everlasting ruin that God sent his Son into the world; it was, "that they who believe in him, should not *perish*," as they must have done without him, "but have everlasting life."

Turn your eyes then to Jesus! see him descending from the bright abode of glory; making himself of no reputation; taking upon himself the form of a servant; being made in the likeness of men: see him humbling himself, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross! Think of the poverty, the pain, the sorrow, the contempt, he bore on earth. Behold him in the garden of Gethsemane, lying on the cold ground; pouring out strong cries and tears; and, in the inconceivable agony of his oppressed soul, sweating great drops of blood! Follow the patient sufferer to the unjust tribunals of Caiaphas, Herod, and Pilate; falsely accused by his malicious enemies, abandoned by his dearest friends, and sentenced to an ignominious punishment! "Behold the man!" crowned with piercing thorns, and torn with cruel scourges. See him bearing the heavy cross along the dolorous way, to the place of common execution. See him stript in the sight of the barbarous multitude; stretched as on a rack; affixed to the cross with spikes; and lifted up, a piteous spectacle, the object of public scorn and derision! Observe the ghastly paleness of death overspreading his sacred face. He dies! the friend of sinners dies! but not till he cried aloud—"It is finished!" Yes, "he finished transgression, made an end of sins, and brought in everlasting righteousness."

You then, who desire that sin may not be your ruin, "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." Believe that "he is able to save to the uttermost;" able to save *you*; "His blood cleanseth from all sin;" and saves from ruin every helpless creature that comes to him for life. Come to him then as your Savior. Cast your soul upon him; "so iniquity shall not be your ruin."

2. *Repentance* is, through out the Scriptures, always represented as necessary to salvation; not, indeed, as the meritorious

cause or condition of pardon; but as that disposition of mind which becomes a guilty sinner; which gives glory to God, and renders the deliverance from ruin unspeakably suitable and precious. Indeed, "repentance is a tear dropped from the eye of faith;" and who can behold the Savior bleeding and dying for him, without confessing, lamenting, and forsaking the sins which occasioned his death?

Repentance is that reasonable service, to which the Lord is, in our text, exhorting the children of Israel: "*Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.*" Our Savior himself insisted upon repentance, saying, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" and all the apostles went out and preached that men should repent.

There is so much pride and ignorance in the hearts of sinners, that, without the special grace of God, they are strongly inclined to conceal or excuse their sins. Some entirely deny them, and say, "they have done no harm;" others justify themselves by putting their good deeds in the opposite scale; others invent excuses for their sins; and instead of blaming themselves as they ought to do, lay the fault on their situations, connexions, and temptations: the greater part add to their sins by attempting to lessen them; and gloss over the vilest iniquities by soft and favorable names; as being "a little free," "a little gay," "a little wild," &c.; and boasting, notwithstanding all their vices, that they mean well, and have a good heart.

But the penitent soul, who dreads the deserved ruin due to his sins, will "not dissemble nor cloak them before the face of Almighty God; but confess them with an humble, penitent, and obedient heart;" he will be far, very far, from boasting of his integrity, his good heart, or his good works: he will discover godly sorrow, grief, and shame; and will abhor himself, as the vilest of the vile, repenting in dust and ashes. To such a person will the God of mercy look with a compassionate eye, for "he is nigh to them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." Yes; we are authorized to say to the humble penitent—"Iniquity shall not be thy ruin." "Go thy way and sin no more."

3. It is necessary that the believing and penitent sinner, who sincerely desires to escape from the wrath to come, should *lead a new life*; I say it is necessary, God requires that he should *lead a new life*. The verse after our text gives this direction to Israel of old—"Cast away from you all *your transgressions whereby ye have trans-*

gressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" ver. 31. These expressions do not suppose a natural or an inherent power in the sinner to effect this: for it is most certain that "without Christ we can do nothing;" and we find that what is here directed to be done, as a matter of *duty*, is elsewhere proposed in a way of *promise*: (see chap. xi. 19.) but by the grace of God accompanying the exhortations of his word, they become effectual to the sinner's conversion: and, as Austin well explains the precept, "God does not command impossibilities: but by commanding, he admonishes us to do what is in our power, and to pray for that which is not."

We can have no sufficient evidence that sin will not be our ruin, until sin becomes our burden; until it be the object of our sincere aversion and hatred; until we renounce the sinful delights of the world, and choose the things we once abhorred. The very bent and disposition of the heart must be altered; turned from sin to holiness, from vanity to godliness, from the creature to the Creator, from earth to heaven. O what a great and glorious change is this, and the very seal of God to this animating message—"So iniquity shall not be your ruin!"

Thus, men and brethren, we have endeavored to prove the truth of the title which we prefixed to this discourse—**RELIGION, OR RUIN**: and have we not made it out? Is it not sufficiently plain from the word of truth, that there are two things to choose—Serious evangelical religion—or everlasting ruin? There are but two different roads to choose—The broad one that leads to destruction, or the narrow one that leads to life; and in the one or the other of these, each of us is now travelling.

And does the person who reads or hears this discourse believe it is so? What then is *thy* choice, my fellow-sinner? Religion, or ruin? Sin and death, or, grace and life? Both are now set before you. Which do you prefer? O dismiss not the subject, till you make a decision. Perhaps it may never be put to you in the same manner any more. It may be the last time of offering. And O how much depends on the choice! May Almighty God help you to make it, and keep to it. "So shall iniquity not be your ruin."

I would most gladly impress on your mind this solemn truth—*Sin is a ruinous thing*. It ruins men, because they do not believe it is ruinous. It may be, you have never yet seen it in this light. You say—"Sin is so pleasant; how can it be ruin-

ous?" I admit that sin is pleasant. There certainly are pleasures in sin: but there are pains too. And a life of sin is not half so pleasant as a life of religion. Ask those who have tried both. How often, even in the present world, does sin procure ruin! How many a promising youth has it ruined:—ruined his health—ruined his character—ruined his family? How many has sin brought to a hospital, to a work-house, to Newgate, to the gallows! to the grave!

You will not believe the ruin, because you do not *see* it, but when seen, it will be too late to escape. In other cases of threatened danger, you give credit to the testimony of a friend, perhaps of a stranger. If I solemnly and affectionately say to a traveller—"My good Sir! venture not through that water which overflows the road; it is deep; it is dangerous; and two men have been drowned there this morning:" you would pause and ponder; and not hastily rush into ruin. If I say to another, "Proceed no farther on the road this evening: a desperate gang of thieves lie in wait at such a spot, and several persons have already been robbed," regard to your property and your life would make you listen to the warning, though it might oppose your inclination and your convenience. If credible merchants assure you, that a city, which you wish to visit, upon business or pleasure, is, at this time, ravaged by the plague or yellow fever; you will carefully avoid the contagious spot, and be thankful for the important, though unwelcome information. Why, then, should not sin, ruinous sin, be shunned? Sin! which is far more dangerous and destructive than water, or thieves, or fever; and the testimony given concerning its danger far more weighty and powerful than that of the most credible mortals; for it is the testimony of the God of truth himself, who cannot lie, and will not deceive.

Believe then the testimony of God, both concerning the ruin and the remedy. How gracious is it in him to give you warning! This destruction may yet be avoided. This is his benevolent language. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help." To save sinners from ruin, Christ hath died; the Gospel is sent to you, inviting you to come to him and find safety; ministers are employed to reason with you, to prevent your ruin; the Bible is put into your hands on purpose to direct you to a refuge. Conscience whispers in your ear—"Religion is, after all, the safest course." Will you then resist all this evidence? reject all these monitors? Is God

merciful to you, and will you be unmerciful to yourself? Are you so in love with ruin, that you will not be persuaded to avoid it? What can be so reasonable as an immediate application to Christ for help? What folly and madness can be equal to a neglect of the means of security! All things are ready. Come then to Jesus, for "there is no condemnation to them that are in him, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." His precious, saving "name is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." *"So shall iniquity not be your ruin."* Amen and Amen!

PRAYER.—**HOLY** Father, suffer us not to deceive ourselves, with regard to the true nature and dreadful consequences of sin. Sin is deceitful, Satan is deceitful, and our own hearts are deceitful; but let us not be deceived, by any means; but fully believe the declaration of thy word,—That sin is ruinous to the souls of men. It has ruined millions, who are now in Hell; and it is ruining millions on earth, who are in the broad road to destruction. May we take warning, and immediately fly from the wrath to come!—and we bless thy name, O God, that thou hast directed us whither to fly,—even to thy dear Son, the only Refuge, the great Deliverer from the wrath to come. May we repent of all our past follies, and with weeping and supplication come to thee, through Jesus Christ, for mercy and grace,—mercy to pardon all the past, and grace to help us in time to come.

Have mercy, we beseech thee, O God, on self-deceived sinners. Open their eyes to discover their danger. Show them the folly and madness of their sinful course,—of their vanity, carnality, and unbelief; and may they seek thee, whilst thou mayest be found, and call upon thee while thou art near, that so iniquity may not be their ruin; and may we, who have escaped the snare, and have believed through grace, ever shun the appearance of evil, and live in holy love and cheerful obedience to our glorious Redeemer, who, with the Father and Holy Ghost, is one God over all blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON LIX.

LOT'S DELIVERANCE.

Genesis xix. 24, 25, 26. Then the Lord rained upon Sodom, and upon Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of Heaven: and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground: But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt.

THE apostle Jude, exhorting Christians to constancy in the faith, reminds them of the terrible judgments of God upon fallen angels—upon his people Israel—and upon the inhabitants of Sodom. Of the latter, he thus speaks, ver. 7. "Even as Sodom

and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." Examples of this kind are not for imitation, but for caution, for warning, for admonition; that all sinners, in all ages, may avoid the destruction, by avoiding the sin.

The history before us is of a very affecting, yet of a very instructive kind, to which we shall do well to give the most serious attention. We shall arrange the most striking circumstances of it under the three following heads.

1. The destruction of Sodom;
2. The deliverance of Lot; and,
3. The apostasy of his wife.

The destruction of Sodom and some neighboring cities was occasioned by their extreme wickedness. "The men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly;" Gen. xiii. 13. The country in which they lived was remarkably beautiful and fertile, "it was well watered everywhere, even as the garden of the Lord," described in the second chapter of this book; and much resembled some of the finest parts of Egypt. Prosperity, however, without grace, is a dangerous snare to the soul. The goodness of God should have led them to repentance and obedience; but, on the contrary, "this was the iniquity of Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness." (Ezek. xvi. 49.) Their plenty only pampered their bodies, and became fuel to their lusts; while abundance of idleness furnished them with those opportunities of indulgence, which honest industry would have prevented. They were uncommonly and outrageously wicked; they gave themselves up to fornication, and to still more vile affections; instead of being ashamed of their sins, they proclaimed them openly, and gloried in their shame. Neither was this the horrid depravity of a few individuals; it was general; it was almost universal; there were not ten persons in it, including the family of Lot, who were free from the dreadful contagion.

These sins are said (ver. 20.) to cry—"The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great." Atrocious sins cry to God for vengeance; they demand a period to that patience which has borne with them so long; they require that the earth should be cleared from such monsters of iniquity; and that a holy God should rise, and manifest his just indignation against them.

God, who is slow to anger, at length arose to judgment. He first revealed his

design to Abraham, who lived a few miles off, and who interceded in the most earnest manner for them; and had there been but ten righteous men in Sodom, it would have been spared for their sakes; such is the gracious regard which God bears to those who fear him. The angels, who were appointed to be the executioners of divine wrath, entered Sodom in the evening; and, appearing as human travellers, were gladly welcomed to the hospitable abode of Lot. There they soon had ocular proof of the dreadful depravity, impudence, and violence of the people. Lot, who reprov'd them for their conduct, was insulted, and exposed to imminent danger, and was rescued from their violent hands only by the supernatural interference of the angels, who smote the clamorous mob with blindness.

Immediate ruin had then become inevitable: and no respite would be allowed, but that which was necessary for the safety of Lot.

Early in the morning, probably at day-break, this good man, his wife, and daughters, were obliged, by a gracious violence, to leave the city and betake themselves to a place of refuge. When this was effected, and Lot was safe in Zoar—"Then," says our text, "*Then* the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven."

How sudden and unexpected was this calamity! "The sun was risen upon the earth." As yet, many who had been revelling in the night were fast asleep in their beds. Others were rising to pursue the business or enjoy the pleasures of the day. Even they who had been warned of the danger were perfectly secure. "Peace and safety" was their cry, when, alas! sudden destruction was just at hand. Our Savior refers to this (Luke xvii. 28.)—"They did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all." They were surprised with the ruin which they would not fear; and indeed, thus it is with sinners in general, even with those who die on their beds; the most awful warnings excite no alarm, men perceive no danger, and death itself strikes the fatal blow in an unexpected moment.

How peculiar, and how tremendous was this destruction! A deluge of water was once the instrument of divine vengeance, overwhelming a guilty world; but who ever heard of a deluge of fire? All the elements are at the disposal of their Maker, whether for the purposes of wrath or of

mercy. Now, indeed, was "the wrath of God revealed *from heaven!*" The expressions are singular—"The LORD rained"—"from the LORD"—The LORD the Son, from the LORD the Father, as some interpret the words; at least it means that JEHOVAH himself sent down this fiery shower; it was his own supernatural act, and not the effect of ordinary causes. Doubtless it was a method of destruction most singular and most dreadful; alluding to this, the psalmist says, "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup." The consternation of this awful hour was, probably, enhanced by the most vivid and frequent flashes of lightning; by tremendous peals of thunder; and by repeated shocks of earthquake. Ah! who can describe, or even conceive, what terror and dismay seized every guilty heart when this universal desolation overwhelmed them; and when these sulphurous flames on earth were about to convey them to everlasting burnings, to "the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone for ever."

Thus were the numerous inhabitants of five populous cities, and perhaps a great number of villages, at once consumed, and blotted out from the land of the living! Thus were many thousands of guilty rebels hurried away by the most awful kind of death, to suffer "the vengeance of eternal fire."

The country itself; once a terrestrial paradise, became the durable monument of this awful event—"it is brimstone, and salt, and burning; it is not sown, nor beareth, not any grass groweth thereon;" (Deut. xxix. 23.) The scene of this desolation is now called the *Dead Sea*; because, say some, no animal lives in it. According to Josephus it is about seventy miles in length, and about twenty in breadth; the ruins of Sodom were formerly visible; and a peculiar substance, called bitumen, or asphaltus, is yet found in it.

But let us turn, in the *second* place, to a more pleasing part of the subject, THE DELIVERANCE OF LOT—"righteous LOT," as the Scripture calls him.

Lot, having been educated by Abraham, the father of the faithful, was no doubt fully instructed in the knowledge of God; nor did he receive this instruction in vain. It is a great privilege for young people to dwell in a pious house, and enjoy the prayers and the example of a believing relative. Some, indeed, despise this advantage; but many, like Lot, will have cause eternally to be thankful for it.

In consequence, however, of the great increase of his worldly substance, he separates from his uncle, and chooses for his residence the fertile meadows of Sodom. In this choice he seems to have been influenced by motives too worldly and carnal. Here, indeed, his wealth increased for a time; but ere long, a war breaking out in the country, Sodom was seized and plundered by the enemy, his flocks and herds removed, and himself taken prisoner. By the gallant behavior of Abraham, however, he recovered his liberty and his property, and settled again in the same pleasant, but ungodly spot.

In this horribly wicked place, he was enabled to maintain his integrity, to keep himself free from the vices of his neighbors, and conduct himself as became a worshipper of Jehovah. But he was far from being happy. He could not be an unconcerned spectator of the enormous wickedness of the inhabitants. St. Peter says, "He was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul, from day to day, with their unlawful deeds." It was much to his honor, that he felt this abhorrence of sin; but he must feel reproved continually, for fixing his residence in such an abandoned place.

It is the unavoidable lot of some, to dwell among the profane; and happy are they who can withstand the torrent of sin; who have "no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness;" but, like Lot, "reprove them." Yet, let every one who values the salvation of his soul avoid, if possible, such a dangerous situation; for no worldly gain can compensate for the evil to which it exposes him; and few, too few, like Lot, preserve themselves untainted from the general pollution. "They who will be rich," even at the hazard of their souls, too frequently "fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition; they err from the faith, and pierce themselves through with many sorrows." This consideration should be duly weighed by parents, in their choice of schools for the education of their children, and in placing them abroad in the world for business: it should weigh with servants in the choice of their situations (as far as choice is practicable to them;) it should render persons of every description cautious in the selection of their companions, especially in the choice of a companion for life; and, indeed, in

every step of their affairs: for many venture, like Lot, into a Sodom, but few, like him, escape unhurt. Every one has not Lot's fortitude; every one has not an Abraham to pray for him.

The hospitality of Lot, in entertaining the illustrious strangers, is recommended to our imitation; for he "entertained angels unawares." By them he was informed of the destruction which they were commissioned to execute upon Sodom and its inhabitants. "We will destroy this place," said they, "because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the Lord; and the Lord hath sent us to destroy it." But he was permitted, and advised, to give immediate warning to his relations. In the course of the night he repairs to their habitations, though probably with great peril to his own person: he calls them up; he warns them as a prophet; he entreats them as a parent. "Up," said he, "get ye out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city." But his sons-in-law rejected the warning with disdain. "He seemed as one that mocked unto them." They had been used to jesting, and they treated this as a jest. "Why should to-morrow differ from other days? Who ever saw it rain fire? Or whence should that brimstone come?" "Thus," saith Bishop Hall, "to carnal men, preaching is foolishness; devotion idleness; the prophets madmen; Paul a babler." These men's incredulity is as worthy of the fire, as the other's uncleanness. *He that believeth not, is condemned already.*"

But now the moment of danger is at hand. No time must be lost. The angels hasten Lot, saying, "Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city." But alas! even Lot himself lingered. Who can conceive the agitation and distress of his mind, on leaving all his property to be destroyed, and his married daughters to be burnt to death! No wonder that he lingered; but "the men laid hold upon his hand, and upon the hand of his wife, and upon the hand of his two unmarried daughters,—the Lord being merciful unto him, and they brought him forth, and set him without the city."

O how often do persons under conviction of sin and danger *linger*! They are satisfied that they ought to separate themselves from the wicked world, and immediately fly from the wrath to come; but they still delay; they are unwilling to leave their connexions; to forsake all, and follow Christ. Nor is the case decided, till the

Lord exert his constraining power and grace, and as it were, by a holy violence, "pluck them as brands out of the fire."

Being now brought out of the city, the angels who were to destroy it take their leave, but with this advice, given with a most gracious vehemence—"escape for thy life;—look not behind thee—neither stay thou in all the plain—escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed," ver. 17. It is in this manner that sinners are warmly exhorted by the word of God to come forth from the spiritual Sodom, from their state of sin and danger. "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." We would "save them with fear, pulling them out of the fire." It is for your lives! Escape, or perish! Repent, or perish! Be converted, or perish!

The Lord was pleased to direct Lot whither to fly for refuge. "Escape to the mountains." As the whole valley was devoted to destruction, the distant hills were appointed as a place of safety. But Lot, aged, wearied, and frightened, probably thinking his strength insufficient to reach one of them, requested leave to retire to a small town that was nearer. "Behold, now, this city is near to flee unto, and it is a little one. O let me escape thither, (is it not a little one?)" This was his infirmity; for God, who had brought him out, and directed him to the mountain, was surely able to strengthen him to reach it. It is dangerous to choose for ourselves, and so the sequel of the story proves; for though his request was granted, and Zoar spared for his sake, yet it appears that he was afterwards obliged to leave it, and dwell in a lonely cave; where, alas! he was tempted to a great sin. How much better then would it have been at once to obey the heavenly order, and take refuge in the appointed mountain! thither God would have graciously conducted him, and there doubtless he would have been safe.

When a sinner forsakes his evil ways, the Gospel directs him to Christ as the only refuge, the only "deliverer from divine wrath." But how many are disposed to tarry in the plain! to rest in reformation and morality merely; or to resort to some other shelter of their own devising. Never should a sinner rest, till, by faith, he hath fled to Jesus, "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world;" till Jesus is made to him, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." Then he is safe.

Lot, his wife, and daughters, being delivered from Sodom, and on their way to Zoar, all seemed to be well. Lot, no

doubt, remembered the divine injunction—"Look not behind thee." God's law, in the least command, as well as in the greatest, is holy, and just, and good: he had wise reasons for this prohibition. Lot must not look back; for it would argue his unwillingness to leave Sodom, and his possessions there; it might intimate his doubt whether the threatening would be accomplished; at any rate it would occasion some delay; he therefore obeys, proceeds, and at length gains the wished-for asylum. Not so his wife: she looks back, and perishes: and this is the

Third particular, which remains to be considered; **THE APOSTASY OF LOT'S WIFE.** "She looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt."

That this very singular and very awful circumstance deserves particular consideration, is evident from the use which our Lord makes of it, Luke xvii. 32, where he says to his disciples, "*Remember Lot's wife.*"

In the flight of the family, it is probable that Lot, more fully convinced of the approaching danger than the rest, took the lead. His wife, not sufficiently attentive to the strict prohibition, "*Look not behind,*" was inclined, by some motive or other, to stop; turn round, and gaze upon the devoted city. Perhaps a trifler will say, And what great harm was there in that? I answer, Much every way. It was an act of *disobedience*; and disobedience is the very essence of sin. It was a contempt of the divine authority, which is equally to be regarded in those things which may seem to us small, as well as those which are apparently great. Her sin was aggravated by her *ingratitude*. It was losing sight of the great goodness of God, in delivering the family, and distinguishing them from the thousands about to perish. God resents with peculiar indignation this brutish disregard of his singular mercies.

Probably there was a mixture of *unbelief* in her offence. She turned, and stopped to see whether the threatened danger was likely to ensue or not. So many persons, among ourselves, will believe nothing but what they can see or account for; let them remember Lot's wife.

But *love of the world* was doubtless her principal sin. She felt a strong attachment to the place, to the people, and to her worldly substance, now left behind; and perhaps entertained a hope that the destruction would not take place, and that she might yet return to the beloved spot.

Indulging these sinful thoughts and af-

fections, she stood, gazing on the city, as yet in prospect, till the horrible storm overtook her. Struck dead probably by a flash of lightning, she was miraculously kept erect and soon incrustated by a shower of that nitro-sulphureous matter, which desolated the whole country. She became a pillar of salt, and there remained, as we learn not only from Scripture, but from several ancient and credible historians, a standing monument, for many ages, of the divine wrath against apostasy.

What must have been the terror of righteous Lot, when he entered Zoar, and missed the partner of his life! Anxious fears for her safety would immediately arise in his heart. When the dreadful storm had subsided, he would doubtless go in search of her; but who can conceive of his astonishment and grief, when he found her transformed into a rock of salt! What an awful addition was this to the loss of all his property, and of his two children, who had perished in the flames! Such, though his life was spared, were the dreadful effects of his worldly-mindedness in settling among the abominable criminals of this country.

And now what remains, but that we select, and fix deeply on our hearts, some of the important lessons which this awful history is intended to teach us.

Surely we must be struck, in the first place, with the extreme depravity of human nature, and the dreadful lengths to which it may proceed, unless restrained by the power of God. We look with just concern on the guilty cities of the plain; but are there not with us, even with us, sins, and crying sins too, against the Lord? Even the sins of Sodom are committed in this country; yea, it may be said to people called Christians, "Sodom hath not done as thou hast done!" Far greater are our privileges than Sodom ever possessed, and our sins are consequently more aggravated than theirs. May we not then fear a just punishment? God is now, and always, the hater of sin; and though a punishment like Sodom's may not fall upon us in this world, yet, he, who is our Judge, hath said, and he says it to us as much as to the Jews—"It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment," than for those who hear the Gospel, but reject its evidences, and neglect its salvation.

Hear then, O sinner, the warning voice of the Gospel, before the storm of wrath comes down. Escape for thy life—Look not behind thee—Tarry not in all the plain—Escape to the mountain—Flee to the

Friend of sinners, who will grant thee refuge, pardon, grace, and eternal life.

What an awful lesson is here against apostasy! O let the Savior's caution resound in our ears—"Remember Lot's wife!" Yes! let us remember her, so as not to imitate her. If you have turned your backs upon the world, then give it up altogether. Will you regret the loss of that company, of those amusements, or even of that property which would have ruined your soul for ever? God forbid! Be thankful, and remember St. Paul. Say with him, "Forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." To him be all the honor and glory, world without end, Amen.

PRAYER.—ALMIGHTY God, who, in all ages, hast manifested to the world thy love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity, enable us to learn, from what we have now heard, what an evil and bitter thing it is to sin against thee. Let thy terrible judgments, which fell upon Sodom and Gomorrah, prove a warning to us and to others; and dreadful as their ruin was, let us fear lest a worse thing should come upon us; for surely, considering our superior privileges, it will be more tolerable for the inhabitants of those cities in the day of judgment than for us, if we continue to provoke thee by our sins. Thou art now saying to us by thy word, Escape for your lives, look not behind you, linger not in the plain, but flee to the mountain. O that we may obey thy gracious voice, and, without a moment's delay, flee to the Savior, and take refuge in him, the only hope set before us. There shall we be safe, for there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus; and, O that we may remember Lot's wife,—so remember her as not to look back,—not to long after the world, its vanities and its pleasures, lest we, like her, should be consumed! But being delivered by thy grace, may we be kept from all sin; be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation! Amen.

SERMON LX.

IRRESOLUTION REPROVED, AND DECISION RECOMMENDED.

1 Kings xviii. 21. And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.

In various periods of human life, and particularly in youth, there is a remarkable hesitation as to the choice a person shall make. On the one hand religion demands his attention; sets before him the destructive consequences of sin, and the necessity of forsaking it; requires him to relinquish

the bewitching vanities of the world, and offers him, in their stead, the pleasures of a good conscience, and an eternal weight of glory in the future world. But nearer at hand, the smiling world presents her flattering joys; invites him immediately to taste her delights, and leave both the bitters and sweets of religion to another day.

Are there any here who, thus hesitate? —I have a message from God unto you: the message which Elijah delivered to the tribes of Israel on the most solemn occasion, when hesitating whether to worship Jehovah or Baal. "How long halt ye between two opinions? If Jehovah be the true God, let him alone be worshipped: but if Baal can prove his divinity, let him have your adoration."

After the death of Solomon, the kingdom was divided; two tribes only, besides that of Levi, adhered to the family of David, and these kept up the worship of Jehovah: the other ten tribes revolted under Jeroboam, and set up the idolatrous worship of Baal. The country of the latter was in extreme misery, having been punished with drought for more than three years. Elijah, a bold and zealous prophet of Jehovah, requests Ahab the king, one of Jeroboam's successors, to collect the people and the priests of Baal; which he did. He then makes a proposal. "Let them give us, said he, two bullocks—let them choose one for themselves, and give us the other. Let the priests of Baal prepare their beast for sacrifice, and lay it on wood; but put no fire under. I will do the same with the other bullock. Let them then call on the name of their gods, and I will call upon the name of Jehovah, and the god that answereth by fire let him be the God." This proposal was so fair, that no person objected. But in vain did the votaries of Baal pray, and cry for his interposition by fire from heaven; "there was no voice, nor any that answered." At length Elijah, having ordered a large quantity of water to be poured on his offering, to prevent the least suspicion of deceit, called upon Jehovah, saying, "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day, that thou art God of Israel." Immediately, the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the whole sacrifice; when, the people being fully convinced, fell on their faces, and said, "The Lord he is God! the Lord he is God!" O that a decision equally happy may crown our present discourse! Some probably are hesitating—halting between two opinions; let me, in my humble measure, imi-

tate the holy prophet, and expostulate with you, "How long halt ye? Why hesitate any longer? If the religion of Jesus be true and holy, and good, why neglect to be seriously religious? If the way of sin and folly be safe and right; if God and conscience approve; and you are sure that it will end well—then pursue it without reserve."

I flatter myself that you will favor me with your serious attention to what I shall offer upon the two following observations:

1. Many persons, and young persons especially, are irresolute and changeable with respect to religion.

2. Such is the reality, pleasure, and advantage of true religion, that it desires and demands our whole hearts; and we ought not to hesitate a moment about giving them fully to it.

Let us first observe, (and who has not observed it?) that many persons seem to hesitate; and show that they are irresolute and undetermined, whether they shall be religious or not.

It must, I think, be admitted, that there is something in religion so solemn and so grand, that it can scarcely fail, if at all regarded, to affect and interest the human mind. When the glorious perfections of the Almighty Being are displayed; when the deformity, turpitude, and mischief of sin are exposed; when the wisdom and grace of the redemption of Christ are unfolded; when the awful solemnities of death and judgment are described; or when the astonishing realities of heaven and hell are exhibited; that heart must be hard, beyond the common degree of hardness, that does not feel a religious impression. The unhappy mortal, accustomed to gross and brutal inattention, or the frivolous creature, habituated to excessive levity, or the haughty rationalist who has been cheated into infidelity, may, perhaps, contrive to resist the impression; but it is with difficulty resisted, and if the darkness be preferred to the light, it is only because the opposer's deeds are evil.

Those persons who attend the house of God, especially those who hear a faithful and able preacher of the Gospel, can scarcely fail to be seriously impressed at times. To every such minister it may be said, as of old it was said to Ezekiel, "Thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that has a very pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument:"—they are surprised with the grandeur of his subjects, affected with the sublimity of his ideas, charmed with the elegance of his language—are as well pleased almost, as

at an oratorio, or a play; but this is all; "for," it is added, "they hear thy words, but they do them not." This temporary affection is justly described by St. James—the mere hearer resembles "a man beholding his natural face in the glass; for he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."—The word of God is a faithful mirror: the *law* discovers our sinful spots; the *Gospel* displays the cleansing blood of Christ. Many a hearer catches a glance of his spots, but does not dwell on the deformity; he goes his way; returns to the vain and busy world, and forgets to apply to the purifying fountain; it is only he who *attentively* looks into the Gospel, and *continueth* therein; steadily regards and retains the truth; it is only he that is "blessed in his deed."

When the word of God is seconded by some alarming and painful providence, deep impressions are sometimes felt. Sickness and solitude bring men to themselves. Affliction obliges them to withdraw from the busy and gaudy scenes of temptation, and if conscience obtain leave to speak, it will plead in behalf of religion. It will accuse for past delay. It will urge to holy resolutions. If death enter the house, and seize one of the family, O how awfully important does religion then appear, and how frequently are some vices abandoned, and some duties commenced! But the heart soon heals; the world regains its dominion, and the sinner hesitates as before.

It is the privilege of some young persons to have at hand the most faithful and the most affectionate of all preachers—a pious and indulgent parent. Wisely catching the favorable moment, he drops a serious hint on the worth of the soul, the uncertainty of life, the approach of death; he recommends, from the experience of years, the excellence of religion, and says that "the Savior's yoke is easy, and his burden light." The youth, not yet hardened by the society of the vicious and the infidel, the tender female especially, heaves a sigh, or drops a tear in unison with that of the parent; perhaps almost wishes to be religious, to gratify the desires of a dear father or mother, knowing that nothing upon earth would be esteemed by their parents a blessing half so great as their sincere piety.

In this state the person resembles king Agrippa, who, under the temporary impression of St. Paul's preaching, was constrained to say—"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian"—almost! alas! *only* almost, not altogether persuaded; some se-

cret reserve is yet made; the strong hold of the heart is yet in the possession of sin, which, without the interposition of almighty grace, will ere long regain all its former dominion.

The bewitching pleasures of sin once more begin to court the soul: some youthful lusts present their flattering baits to the senses, and find within a party eager to catch at them. We are fallen creatures; our minds are become carnal; and we have a strong propensity to indulge the flesh. The seed of every sin is deposited in our corrupt nature; and though the seed may long continue dormant, yet, if, like a vegetable seed that has been buried deep in the earth, it be brought towards the surface, and placed in a favorable situation, it will unfold all its hidden powers, and ripen into open transgression. Such is the fascinating power of sin, especially when become habitual, that it will insist upon indulgence at any rate; even at the expense of fortune, character, and life itself. And now all those promising appearances before spoken of disappear, and are covered, like the writing on the sea-shore, with the overwhelming tide.

The strong attraction of evil company is another source of danger. Man is formed for society; and we may add, he is formed *by* his society, whether it be good or evil. When Satan sinned and fell, he speedily drew man into the same condemnation. When Eve was prevailed upon to taste the forbidden fruit, she hastened to induce her husband to commit the same transgression. It is observable, what pains are usually taken by the votaries of pleasure and of vice, to lead their companions into the same; how strongly do they solicit the young and the unsuspecting, to become parties in their ensnaring amusements and dangerous pleasures. Not content with their own sin and ruin, they become the missionaries of Satan, and labor to make proselytes for hell. But O that the advice of the wise man were regarded—"My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."

The fear of shame, on account of religion, keeps many in a hesitating state. Glorious and highly honorable as the religion of Jesus certainly is, the advocates of sin will pretend that it is a mean and low thing, not fit for persons of discernment, of taste, of fashion; they will say, that to be moved with religious affections, is to be irrational and enthusiastic; and that your religious people, with all their pretensions, are only concealed hypocrites, and all their devotion merely whining and

cant. Here, perhaps, the youth is brought to a stand. "Shall I then," says he, "encounter all this shame and disgrace? Must I, if religious, be treated with contempt by the world in general? Who can endure this?"

But stop, my friend, and let us argue this matter. What do you blush at? Are you ashamed of acknowledging your Creator, and bowing the knee before your Redeemer? Is it an unreasonable thing to credit the God of truth, or to love him who is infinitely amiable? Is it mean and base to secure your everlasting happiness even while at the same time you are promoting your best interests upon earth? If you are tempted to yield to the world, because it forms the great majority, you are in a mistake. "There are more, far more with us than with them." I know that the visible crowd of deceived mortals take part against religion, but what are they, compared with those who espouse it? Is not the great and eternal God with us? Does not he approve the humble and the pious soul? Is not Jesus, the glorious Savior, with us? He was once himself despised and rejected of men on account of his piety, and now he is exalted on the throne of glory, he knows how to pity and defend his persecuted people. On our side we boast the innumerable tribes of angels, whose business and delight it is to minister to the heirs of salvation. Shall we be ashamed to do the will of God on earth as angels do in heaven? This is our prayer; shall it not be our practice too? With us, we associate all the spirits of just men made perfect, who, like an immense cloud of spectators, seem to look down upon us to animate us in our Christian course. Are *they* ashamed of their former diligence in religion? Why then should we? Yea, we may add—(awful thought!) the myriads of the damned, whose dwelling is in darkness and despair, are now of our mind. Once they laughed at the religious, but now their language is—"This is he, whom we had sometimes in derision, and a proverb of reproach: we fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honor: now is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints!" *Wisdom of Solomon*, v. 4.

There is yet another cause of hesitation: it is temporal advantage. "Must I incur," says the halting professor, "must I incur the displeasure of my superiors, who despise religion, and who will despise me for it? Must I venture on the anger of a beloved parent, the displeasure of an indulgent husband, or the resentment of a gen-

erous patron?" I answer, you are only to determine, whether it be better to obey God or man. You are to remember, that "one thing is needful," even the care of the soul, which must be preferred to every temporal good: and you should recollect, that if you "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, every earthly blessing, that is good for you, shall be added thereto." Call to mind the wise and holy conduct of Moses, who "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt;" and this he did "by faith;" for, he renounced the prospect of worldly wealth, in expectation of the "recompense of the eternal reward." Go thou and do likewise.

Thus then we see the tempted soul halting between two opinions. At one time, religion appears not only necessary, but excellent and beautiful: the Sabbath a sweet day of devotional rest; the house of God has a thousand charms to invite attendance; the Bible a book of sacred instruction and entertainment; and prayer, a rational and delightful employment. But, through the power of temptation, at another time, the scene is changed. Insensibly mixing with men of the world, the heart is seduced again, and gaiety, music, dress and dancing assume new charms and captivate the affections. Then religion sinks in the scale. Religion seems to wear a frowning aspect: the cavils of the infidel gather weight and importance; and infidelity promises, not future happiness, but present gratification, and that without the restraints which were feared before. Religion offers to make the man a saint; but as this appears too laborious, he relinquishes the future hope, and inclines to become a happy brute.

But still the mind is unsettled. Conscience is on the Lord's side. Something within yet withholds assent, and fears that all will not end well at last. The very sight of a good man will shake its confidence. A tolling-bell, the view of a funeral, the news of a sudden death, or the apprehension of a fit of sickness, will excite alarm: and a faithful sermon will make the man like Felix tremble. How many have we known, who, when spectators of the death of others, or under apprehensions of their own, have found their ground untenable, and have admitted that there is a reality in religion, and that it is necessary to their peace! Should the reader be disposed to make such a concession, he will be prepared to hear,

2. That such is the reality, pleasure and advantage of true religion, that it deserves and demands our whole hearts.

In the case before us, the question was,

“Who is God—Jehovah or Baal?” It was agreed, before the decision was made, that the true God should be followed, the false deserted. Would to God the same determination were made in all our minds! If religion be real, pleasant and profitable, we will embrace it, let the consequence be what it may. The trial was made. Baal’s votaries sought him in vain—“there was no voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded.” But when the prophet of Jehovah cried—“Let it be known this day that thou art God, and that I am thy servant;” then the fire of the Lord descended, dried up the water, and consumed the sacrifice. The people were convinced, worshipped God, and destroyed his enemies. So let it be with us; if it can be made to appear that our religion is of God, then let us be truly religious, and destroy whatever impediment opposes its power and perfection.

But you will say, What do you mean by religion? The question is good. I will answer it. I mean by religion, not a system of opinions, nor a set of ceremonies; but a humbling conviction of our ruined state by sin; the application of the soul to Christ, as an all-sufficient Savior; and a sincere endeavor to oppose sin and live unto holiness. This is real religion. The religion of the Gospel. The religion which the Holy Spirit teacheth, and the disciple of Jesus learneth. It is for the mind to be enlightened, so as to discover the holy character of God; to see our own deformity in the glass of his holy law; to be humbled in the dust as penitent sinners: and then heartily to embrace the salvation proclaimed by the Gospel; to receive Jesus as our teacher, our righteousness, and our Lord, and to give up ourselves, without reserve, to be his for ever.

This religion is a glorious reality. It is scriptural; it is rational; it is experimental; it is practical. It answers the true ends of religion; it makes us holy and happy. It renews the heart; it reforms the manners; and secures eternal bliss.

This is the religion, which, for substance, has been the choice and the practice of all the wise and good men who ever lived, from the days of Abel until now. This is the religion we affirm to be very pleasant and advantageous; for it includes the sublime delight of a good conscience delivered from guilt by the atoning blood of Christ; the inexpressible pleasure of communion with God in his ordinances, public and private; the privilege of society with the excellent on earth; preservation from a thousand mischiefs and miseries to which the irreligious are liable; it affords a solid

ground of consolation in the unavoidable evils of life; and it sustains the soul amidst the awful circumstances of death, with a lively hope full of immortality.

These and many more, are the *present* advantages of true godliness: but who can describe those which are to come? Who can tell what are the joys at God’s right hand—what it is to be with Christ, and behold his glory—what it is to enter into the joy of the Lord; to see him as he is; to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; to spend eternal ages in the beatific presence of God and the Lamb?

These then are the blessings of that holy religion which demands our whole hearts. And do we still hesitate—still halt between two opinions? Surely this hesitation is quite unreasonable, and unlike any thing in our ordinary conduct. Does the sick man hesitate whether to accept of health, if it be in his power? Does the poor man hesitate when relief, when wealth is offered to him? Does the dutiful youth require a moment to determine whether or not he should love his father or his mother? Do we stop to inquire whether health and life ought to be preserved? If not, why halt between two opinions in the greater concern of eternal life and salvation? If we halt, it is a proof that we are not convinced of its necessity or its advantage. But have we not sufficiently proved that such is the reality, pleasure and advantage of the religion of Christ, that it deserves and demands our whole hearts? Now, then, let the matter be brought to a final issue! Now let the awful decision be made.

Witness, ye angels! ye benevolent spirits, who frequent our religious assemblies, and sometimes carry the glad tidings of a sinner’s conversion to heaven, witness the decision which shall now be made!

“Choose then, this day,” this moment, “whom you will serve. If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord; choose this day whom ye will serve.” Only remember, “ye cannot serve two masters.” God will not accept of a divided heart. Does your heart say—“God forbid that we should forsake the Lord.” Then be it so. From this happy moment, let it be a settled point, religion, serious religion, vital religion shall be my first great business, and every thing that opposes it shall give place. So say, and so do, my brethren, and you are made for ever. Shall I then add, as Joshua in a similar case, “Ye are witnesses against yourselves, that ye have chosen you the Lord to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses.” May God confirm your resolution, and by his almighty grace ever enable you to act conformably to it!

PRAYER.—O most merciful and blessed God, thy service is perfect freedom, and all thy ways are peace and pleasure. Shall we then hesitate a moment whether to serve thee or not? Can sin, with all its enchantments,—can the world, with all its allurements, offer any thing equal to thy great salvation,—to pardon, peace, holiness, and Heaven! O God, to whom can we repair but unto thee, for thou only hast the words of eternal life; and dare we yet delay? Shall we still cry out, “A little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the hands to sleep? Awaken us, O our God, lest we sleep the sleep of death. O Lord, save us from ourselves!—save us from the deceitfulness of sin!—save us from evil companions, save us from the snares of the Devil! Suffer us to trifle no longer,—no longer to halt between two opinions; and whatever be the consequence, whatever reproach may assail us, whatever afflictions may await us, whatever sacrifices we are called to make, help us now by thy Holy Spirit, to choose the good part, which shall never be taken from us. Help us now to say, The Lord, he is the God,—the Lord, he is the God; and, whatever others do, we will serve the Lord. Be it so, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

SERMON LXI.

SIN DETHRONED.

Romans vi. 14. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

THE general power and prevalence of sin in the world is a most affecting consideration to a serious mind. He who knows how displeasing sin is to a holy God, and how destructive to the souls of men, cannot but lament the awful dominion it retains, even in a Christian country, where the will of God is revealed, where the consequences of sin are exposed, and where a sufficient remedy against it is presented.

This remedy, however rejected by many, is most thankfully received by a true Christian, who esteems a deliverance from the power of sin no less than a freedom from the guilt of it. If his first inquiry be, “What shall I do to be saved?” his next is, “Who shall deliver me from this body of sin?” Blessed be God, the Gospel furnishes us with a satisfactory answer to both these inquiries. The Redeemer of men “came by water and blood; not by water only, but by water and blood”—the water and the blood which flowed from his wounded side was an admirable emblem of the double design of his death, which was both to justify and to sanctify—to discharge from guilt, and to cleanse from pollution—to purge our consciences from dead works, and to deliver us from the dominion, as well as from the danger of sin. Sin shall not condemn the believer, because

Christ hath died; sin shall not govern the believer, because he is under grace.

This comfortable declaration of the apostle Paul is here introduced, in consequence of a supposed objection to the glorious doctrines and privileges asserted in the former chapters of this epistle, particularly in the conclusion of the fifth chapter—“Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound”—as the exceeding sinfulness of sin is manifested by the law, so the superabounding grace of God in the pardon of sin is made gloriously conspicuous by the Gospel. To this illustrious truth, some pharisaical or some licentious persons may object, and connect with it this base inference—“Let us continue in the practice of sin, that this famous grace may abound so much the more in pardoning us.” But does the holy apostle allow this inference to be just? No: his heart rises with indignation at the thought of such an abuse of divine grace; and he shows that believers in Christ were, by their profession and their baptism, dead to sin, and engaged to imitate their Savior in a holy obedience; to which he adds the encouraging declaration in the text—“Sin shall not have dominion over *you*,”—over you *believers*; and for this reason—“ye are not under the law, but under *grace*.”

To a sincere disciple of Christ, freedom from the power of sin is a most desirable blessing; his desires, his prayers, his endeavors, are continually directed to this point: whatever, therefore, may assist him in the attainment of this great object will be truly welcome. This text, then, which shows the means appointed of God for the purpose of delivering us from sin, demands our most careful attention. May the Holy Spirit assist and succeed our meditations, while we consider,

I. The evil which we are encouraged to resist; and,

II. The means afforded for our encouragement in resisting it.

1. The evil which, as Christians, we are encouraged to resist is the dominion of sin. In this chapter, St. Paul represents sin as a master, and men as his servants—sin as a lord, and men as his vassals—sin as a king, and men as his subjects. He considers sin as a mighty usurper, a tyrant, exercising absolute dominion over the sinner; taking the sinner’s heart for his throne, and the members of his body for his slaves. “Ye were,” saith he, “the servants of sin, for his servants ye are to whom ye obey; your members were instruments of unrighteousness to sin; sin reigned in your mortal bodies, so that he

obeyed the lusts thereof; sin abounded; sin reigned unto death." By these strong expressions he justly represents the uncontrolled power of sin over the natural man; who refuses submission to the easy yoke of God's authority, and tamely submits to the vile and destructive drudgery of the tyrant of hell.

By a successful stratagem, sin obtained the supremacy over our first father: and his posterity, while they remain in their natural state, have never been able to break the yoke. Sin has reigned, and death has reigned, from that time to the present. No monarchy can pretend to an antiquity equal with this: nor has any monarchy been so extensive as this. Whatever have been the variations of climate, color, or customs, sin has been uniform in maintaining its empire. Go into all nations; and whether you call them Pagan, or Mahometan, or Jewish; whether barbarous or civilized; whether Catholic or Protestant, you must call them all sinners. In our own country, civilized as it is, enlightened as it is, full of churches and Bibles as it is, sin reigns; sin has the dominion over Britons, the few excepted, whom the Son of God hath made "free indeed." This awful representation of the matter is justified by the apostle John, who says—"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness," or, "is in subjection to the wicked one." This dreadful dominion of sin is promoted by various means.

1. By ignorance of God's will. In some countries, this is almost total; in ours it is partial, and in a great measure wilful. If we do not know our master's will, it is because we do not wish to know it; it is because we do not "like to retain God in our knowledge;" it is because we "love darkness better than light, our deeds being evil." And this, no doubt, is a principal cause that so many forsake the house of God, and neglect to read their Bibles; they are not disposed to do the will of God; why then should they learn it?

2. Our corrupt passions and sensual propensities reject divine control. O how strongly are we inclined to evil! how impetuous our desires! beloved lusts will be gratified, though health, reputation, fortune, life itself, are at stake. "How abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh iniquity like water!" "who draweth iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart-ropes;" "who doeth evil with both hands earnestly!" So doth God, by his prophets, describe the vigorous and de-

termined actings of sin in the corrupt nature of man.

3. The power of sin is promoted by the worldly interests of men, to which they readily give the decided preference, when they happen to clash, as they often do, with their duty to God. When profit may be obtained, when pleasure may be enjoyed, when fame may be acquired, farewell duty! farewell the will of God! farewell heaven! They will sacrifice conscience and their everlasting interests to the gratification of the moment. Thus, for the sake of the world, the guests invited to the Gospel feast, with one consent, desired to be excused, and the rich man departed from Jesus full of sorrow.

4. The dominion of sin is promoted by the powerful temptations and subtle artifices of Satan; he goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; he presents the pleasures of sin in the most alluring colors; he hides from men the pernicious consequences; encourages them to venture boldly on the most daring offences; tells them that God is very merciful, and repentance very easy: and thus supports his cruel empire over the world of sinners.

5. The countenance and example of the multitude contribute much to the support of sin's dominion. Sinners readily follow the multitude to do evil. The broad road that leads to destruction is thronged with travellers; and natural men smoothly follow the course of this world. This has a wonderful tendency to silence the remonstrances of conscience, and to prevent that shame which would be unavoidable, were sin less common. Sinners are kept in countenance by the majority of their fellow-creatures; if *they* are the slaves of iniquity, so are the greater part of their friends, and neighbors, and countrymen; and they are ready to hope, that what is so general cannot be very dangerous.

Some proceed further, and venture to glory in their shame. "Were they ashamed," said God by the prophet, "when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed: neither could they blush; therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them, they shall be cast down, saith the Lord." Jer. vi. 15. It argues an awful degree of hardness of heart, and affords a fear that God has given sinners entirely up, when they not only "commit such things as are worthy of death, but have pleasure in them that do them." Sin is the daily business, the chosen portion of

some; they "make provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof;" "Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to-morrow shall be as this day and much more abundant."

Such is the dominion of sin! such its absolute power over the children of Adam! such the means whereby it is promoted and maintained.

By some, indeed, it is occasionally opposed. The power of conscience, the influence of education, the exhortations of ministers, the fear of death, or the love of reputation, induce some to oppose its entire dominion. There have been, in all ages, persons smitten with the beauty of virtue, and shocked at the deformity of vice, who have made considerable attempts to deliver themselves and others from the government of sin: but, without the knowledge of Christ, their efforts have proved ineffectual. Many of the heathen philosophers were themselves awful and pitiable proofs of the weakness of fallen nature to contend with the power of sin. Nor have many nominal Christians succeeded much better. Like the formal Jews, they "followed after the law of righteousness," and with great apparent zeal; but they attained it not. What was the cause of their failure? St. Paul says, it was—"Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; for they stumbled at that stumbling-stone." Let us beware of this error. Let us profit by the instruction of the text. This is a light to our feet in this very important matter—"Sin shall not have dominion over *you*." What shall prevent it? The apostle adds, "*for ye are not under the law, but under grace*." And this is the thing we proposed to consider,

II. The means afforded for our encouragement in resisting sin: these are included in the words—"for ye are not under the *law*, but under *grace*."

Grace is here opposed to the law, and signifies the Gospel; which, in Scripture, is frequently opposed to it, as in John i. 17, "The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ." The Gospel may, with the strictest propriety, be called *grace*, because it is a declaration of the wonderful grace of God in the redemption of sinners by Jesus Christ; and it is so to be understood, 2 Cor. vi. 1. "We beseech you, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain:" that is—that ye receive not the doctrine of the Gospel unprofitably. So St. Paul exhorted the people at Antioch "to continue in the grace of God;" Acts

xiii. 43; and, in another place, it is said, that "God gave testimony to the word of his grace."

The apostle mentions it as a reason why the believing Romans should not continue under the power of sin, that they were no longer under the law, but under the Gospel; consequently it appears that those who are under the Gospel dispensation possess greater advantages for the destruction of sin, than those who were, or are, under the law.

By the law, we are to understand not the ceremonial or judicial law of Moses, which was peculiar to the Jews, and to which most of the Roman Christians had never been subject; but the moral law, or the law of the ten commandments; for it is the law by which the apostle himself learned the true nature of sin, chap. vii. 7. this was the law which he says is "holy, just, good, and spiritual;" the law in which he says he "delighted, after the inward man;" and compared with which he adds, "I am carnal, sold under sin."

This holy law of God was a system of just but awful severity; it was given at Mount Sinai in so tremendous a manner, that Moses himself was exceedingly terrified. But God had wise and holy designs in the establishment of it. "The law entered, that the offence might abound"—it was introduced among the Jews, not that they might be justified by it, but, by discovering how far they fell short of the obedience it required, and how their native corruption was rather irritated than suppressed by its most holy precepts, they might be more deeply impressed with a sense of their abounding sins; and thus it became (together with the ceremonial law) "a schoolmaster, to lead them to Christ;" and to prepare the way for the Gospel, in which the grace of God is as eminently conspicuous, as his holiness was under the law; and that so, where sin had abounded, grace might much more abound."

Now, believers in Christ are "not under the law;" they are "dead to the law;" they are "delivered from the law." By these expressions, we are not to suppose that they are discharged from their obligations to obedience to God; for the apostle expressly says of himself, 1 Cor. ix. 21, that he was "not without law to God, but under the law to Christ;" but believers are no longer under the law, considered as a covenant, the terms of which are, "the man that doeth them" (all and every man perfectly) "shall live in them." Jesus Christ has fulfilled all righteousness for his people, and is the end of the law for

righteousness to every one who believeth. Being accounted righteous through faith in Christ, they are redeemed from the curse of the law; there is no more condemnation to them; and the Gospel (which is the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus) hath made them free from the law of sin and death. Rom. viii. 2.

It should be remembered, that while the law justly demanded obedience, it afforded no aid for the performance of it. Nor could it encourage any one to hope for pardon, in case of disobedience. It must therefore be allowed that the law excited fear and a spirit of bondage, God dealing with his people who were under it rather as servants than as sons.

The case is now altered. We are not called to "Mount Sinai," to hear the terrible threatenings of the law; but we are come to "Mount Zion," where grace, free, sovereign grace and mercy are published. Here indeed the holiness and justice of God are also gloriously displayed; but not, as under the law, in demanding from us a perfect unsinning obedience as the condition of life, and in denouncing the just wrath of God upon a defect of it; but in showing that Jesus Christ, our glorious surety, has magnified the law, and made it eternally honorable, by his own obedience to death in our behalf, on account of which God is now just, while he is the justifier of the ungodly.

The Gospel affords another advantage above the law. The law included the substance of all the holy precepts now contained in the New Testament; but in the Gospel they are expanded and full-blown, and appear in all the loveliness and beauty of holiness. Jesus Christ, our only law-giver, has divinely explained the duties briefly contained in the decalogue, especially in his admirable sermon on the mount. And the epistles of his inspired apostles to the churches adapt the general precepts of the law to every relation and condition of life; showing exactly the distinct duties of subjects, of husbands, wives, parents, children, servants, members of Christian societies, so that nothing is wanting clearly to disclose the full meaning of the two grand commandments—the supreme love of God, and the disinterested love of our neighbor.

The Gospel dispensation is superior to that of the law on another account; there is a more abundant measure of the Holy Spirit poured out upon the people of God, by which they not only attain a clearer knowledge of his will, but a larger degree of his gracious assistance in overcoming

sin. It is the peculiar promise of the covenant of grace, Heb. viii. 10, "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." Now this is a great deal more and better than having the laws of God written in a book, or fixed against a wall (though these are useful too) it includes the renovation of our souls, by the effectual operation of the Holy Spirit, whereby the mind is divinely enlightened, and the heart powerfully disposed, and enabled to comply with the will of God.

The Gospel assures us of sufficient grace for every purpose required. All grace is treasured up in Jesus for the use of his people; in him "all fullness dwells;" and "of this fullness they may receive daily, grace for grace." John i. 16. There is an inexhaustible fullness of grace in him, as the head of the church: and it is intended for the supply of believers; so that in all their wants and sorrows they may, by prayer and faith, receive abundance of grace. Whatever duties they have to perform, whatever trials they are called to bear, whatever sins they have to oppose, they may depend on sufficient strength and grace for the purpose. On this ground, St. Paul boldly says, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." He was weak in himself, but strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, who, upon a certain occasion, said to him, for his encouragement, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." 2 Cor. xii. 9.

The love of Christ is another grand assistant in our victory over sin. Love is the most strong and generous of all the passions, and the hardest service becomes easy when this prevails. This was that which supported the first Christians in their almost incredible labors and sufferings. The lively sense they entertained of his wonderful affection to their souls, in dying for their sins, animated them to the most vigorous exertions in his cause, led them to glory in his cross, and to esteem themselves happy in laying down their lives for his sake. "The love of Christ," said St. Paul, "*constraineth us*"—it *bears us away* like a strong and resistless torrent, (2 Cor. v. 14.) while we thus judge, that, if Christ died for our redemption, even when we were in a state of condemnation and death, it is fit that our ransomed lives should be sacred to him; this consideration will have a powerful effect upon the believer, when tempted to sin. Shall that sin which Christ hated—that sin for which Christ suffered—that sin which he died to deliver me from, have dominion

over me? God forbid! Am I not dead to sin by baptismal engagements and obligations? Am I not baptized into his death? engaging thereby to be conformed to it? that, as he died for it, I should die to it; and that, as he was raised from the dead, so I should arise from the grave of sin, to walk in newness of life? Is not my old man of sin crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth I should not serve sin? Such is the reasoning of the holy apostle in this chapter, and such is the holy reasoning of every child of God, in his right mind.

The grace of the Gospel affords yet farther aid in this great conflict, by the cheering views it presents of everlasting glory. We are engaged in a severe warfare, but under the Captain of our salvation, we are assured of victory. Though we have been the slaves of sin, we may boldly reject its usurped authority, and transfer our faculties to the service of Christ, with the certainty of acceptance and protection. Let our members henceforth be employed as weapons in the Lord's warfare. Unequal as we are to encounter native depravity, inveterate habits of evil, an alluring or threatening world, a raging and subtle devil; when enlisted in Christ's service, we may truly say, "there are more on our side than against us:" yea, "If God be for us," (and he certainly is, if warring against sin) "who can be against us?" Nothing, however hostile and formidable, shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Our perseverance to the end is secured by the promise and power of God; and we shall be more than conquerors through him. We shall be enabled to say, at the solemn close of life, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Covered with unworthiness and shame, in ourselves considered, we shall be presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. Our weak and defiled bodies shall become heavenly and incorruptible; living under grace, we shall die into glory, and rise to eternal life.

Such are the solid and sublime hopes of the Christian. And will these have no holy influence upon his conduct? Hear St. John. "Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure." The heirs of glory will disdain the low gratification and filthy drudgery of sin. They know that their Savior is holy, the society they expect to join is holy, their employments and delights will be holy; their hope therefore, as well as their faith, will purify their souls, influ-

ence their walk, and prevent the dominion of sin.

CONCLUSION.

Who can behold the general dominion of sin over the world without the deepest concern! O that ever this cursed foe to God and man should acquire universal authority! "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" If sin continue to reign, it will reign unto death; the wages of sin is death. Sin unpardoned, sin unsubdued, must issue in the sinner's everlasting destruction. What then is *my* state? Does sin reign over me; or have I obtained dominion over sin? Let conscience make a sincere inquiry, and report a faithful answer.

Having learned by this discourse, that no means are effectual to stop the progress of sin, but those afforded by the Gospel of grace, let this serve to render the Gospel more dear and precious. It is not by the knowledge of the law, nor by endeavors in our own strength to fulfil its precepts, that the power of sin can be destroyed. No; it is only the Gospel that is the power of God unto salvation—salvation from the guilt, or salvation from the dominion of sin. It is the knowledge of Christ crucified; it is faith in him; it is union to him; it is love to him; it is hope in him; that must invigorate my soul in this holy war. Let me then highly prize the Gospel of grace, and earnestly pray for the grace of the Gospel; that so, having obeyed from the heart that form (or mould) of doctrine, into which I have been delivered, my whole temper and life may be transformed into a glorious resemblance of it; being "made free from sin, and become a servant of God, my fruit may be unto holiness, and my end everlasting life."

This subject effectually refutes that vile slander which is so unjustly cast on the doctrines of grace, as if they were conducive to sin, and unfriendly to holiness. The very reverse is the truth; for while the professed advocates of righteousness by the law can make no effectual stand against the power of sin, but are commonly its wretched vassals; humbled believers in Jesus, justified by his blood, and saved alone by grace, are enabled to fight the good fight of faith, and subdue their most powerful iniquities; and thus, "grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." To whom, the Conqueror over sin, and death and hell, be glory in all the Churches, world without end. Amen.

PRAYER,—Most holy God, how awful is the state of man by nature! We confess, with shame, that sin has usurped the dominion over the whole human race. Sin, like a mighty monarch, hath reigned over all the children of Adam; sin hath reigned in our mortal bodies, so that we have obeyed the lusts thereof; sin hath awfully abounded, and threatened to reign unto death! but grant, O Lord, we beseech thee, that sin may no longer have dominion over us. We rejoice that Jesus Christ hath come into the world, not only to deliver us from the guilt of sin, but also from its power; that what the law could never do, in that it was weak through the flesh, the Son of God hath effected, by shedding his precious blood, that so, all who believe, might be made free from the law of sin and death. We rejoice that we are now not under the law, but under grace; and that the Gospel affords every advantage we can desire to deliver us from the bondage of sin. O give us thy Holy Spirit, that, through his grace, we may mortify the deeds of the body; and being constrained by the love of Christ, we may depart from all iniquity. May our hearts be purified by faith, that now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, we may have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON LXII.

UNIVERSAL HOLINESS.

Zechariah xiv. 20. In that day there shall be upon the bells of the horses—*HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD.*

THE predictions of the prophet in this chapter appear to refer to the times of the Gospel, when the word of Christ first preached at Jerusalem, should be propagated far and wide; and when the kingdom of Messiah should be generally established. Perhaps the text itself may be a prediction of the latter-day glory, when the knowledge of Christ shall cover the whole earth; and when the holiness of God's people shall be remarkably great and glorious, so that in all their conversation, and in all their actions, civil as well as religious, one uniform tenor of holiness will appear. Should this not be the special design of the words, it will nevertheless be allowed, that at all times, and in all places, "Holiness becometh the house of the Lord;" and that it is his royal will and pleasure, that all who name the name of Christ should depart from all iniquity, and be holy in all manner of conversation and godliness.

This holiness, which we call universal holiness, because it extends to the whole man, and to his whole conduct, is described in the text in a remarkable manner. The prophet foretells that holiness to the

Lord shall be written on the bells or bridles, that is, upon the ornaments of the horses. Now this inscription, *Holiness unto the Lord*, was originally engraved on a plate of gold, and fixed on the front of the mitre, or turban, of the high-priest; and it was ordered to be upon his forehead, when he went into the holy of holies, that he might bear the iniquity of Israel, and that they might be accepted before Jehovah, Exod. xxxviii. 38. In wearing this, he was a type of Christ, our great high-priest, "the holy one of God," who bore our iniquities in his own body on the cross, and who now appears in the presence of God for us, and for our acceptance: it might also denote the personal holiness of true believers, who should be openly devoted to God, as if this inscription appeared on their foreheads.

But it is here said, that this inscription shall be found on the ornaments of the horses. Were we to take it literally, it might signify that great and rich men, or travellers, shall be so far from being ashamed of religion, that they shall write this motto on the trappings of their horses, as gentlemen now use their crests; that they shall glory in their profession of the Gospel, and make this sentence a memento to themselves, that they may do every thing to the glory of God. But we may more properly consider the meaning to be, that religion shall not be confined to sacred persons, times, and places, as this inscription originally was to the high-priest; but that all real Christians, being "a holy priesthood," "a nation of priests," shall be religious at all times and in all things; that true holiness shall extend itself to all the ordinary concerns of life: in a word, that Christians shall be universally holy. The proposition, therefore, which we derive from the text, and shall endeavor to enforce, is this,

Universal holiness becomes the profession of the Gospel.

To be holy, signifies, in Scripture, to be set apart, from a common or profane use, to God and his service. Holiness is the renovation of our nature by the Spirit of God; it is the restoration of the image of God in our souls; whereby we are enabled to die unto sin, and to live unto righteousness; and this, by virtue of our union with Christ, and by means of his Gospel.

It should be understood, that the holiness required by the Gospel is something far superior to what is called morality, or a practice of the duties of life. This is good in its place, and useful to society: and all the duties of morality are included

in holiness. But holiness supposes the renewal of the heart in its powers and dispositions. The understanding, which by nature is in gross darkness as to divine things, is enlightened by the Spirit of God, and enabled to receive "the truth as it is in Jesus." The will, which is naturally averse from good, and strongly inclined to sin, is so renewed by grace, that it chooses the good and rejects the evil; hates what is hateful to God, and loves what is agreeable to him. The affections of the soul, which were before wild and carnal, are now brought into order and subjection, fixing with delight upon those spiritual and heavenly objects, which they once neglected and despised. The leading powers of the soul being thus sanctified, the members of the body, which were "instruments of unrighteousness to sin," become "instruments of righteousness unto God." The eyes, the tongue, the ears, the hands, the feet, are not only restrained from sin, as St. Paul said of himself, that he "kept his body under, and brought it into subjection;" but they become ready to obey God, to whom they yield themselves in order to the practice of righteousness: the tongue lays itself out in the praises of God, and the commendation of holiness; the hands and feet in assisting our neighbor, and the other parts of the body, according to their several capacities, in the practice of religion.

Hence it appears that there is a universal change made in a real Christian; which is very far superior to the mere practice of morality. True holiness has always a relation to Christ and the Gospel; it is by virtue of union with him, the exercise of faith in him, and diligent imitation of him, that the Christian becomes holy: and the whole of this is effected by the gracious and supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit. Thus St. Paul expresses his generous wishes for his Thessalonian friends, 1 Eph. v. 23. "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly: and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here we perceive that God himself is the author of holiness; it must come from him; for there is nothing in our fallen nature to produce it: and it proceeds from him, as he is "the God of peace; as reconciled to us through the blood of his Son: and he is said to "sanctify us wholly"—our whole nature partakes of his sanctifying grace: and he instances it in the various powers of our nature. By the *Spirit*, we may understand the *mind*, that

leading faculty of man, whereby he is distinguished above other creatures; by the *soul*, may be intended the inferior faculties, the passions, and affections; and by the *body*, the outward man, with its various senses, is designed. Each of these powers is already sanctified in its measure, and shall be completely so at last; so that the whole shall be found blameless at the second coming of Christ.

The principal instrument employed by the Spirit of grace in effecting this holy change, is the word of the Gospel; according to our Lord's petition for his disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth;" and according to his declaration in another case, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." When the doctrines, promises and precepts of the Gospel are understood, and applied to the heart, they cannot fail to regulate the whole of the conduct. Hence the great change, observable in some of the first converts from Pagan idolatry and vice to Christianity, is ascribed to faith; "their hearts were purified by faith." Acts xv. 9. And, so far is the faith of the Gospel from being injurious to the cause of holiness, that it is essentially necessary to its existence: indeed the sum of our holy religion is, the "faith that worketh by love."

The holiness of the Gospel, of which we are speaking, has for its grand objects, God and our neighbor. To love God supremely is the first concern of the believer. His glorious perfections entitle him to the highest place in the heart. Heathen moralists, and some who assume the Christian name, profess to practise virtue for its own sake; but the believer goes further, he makes it his ambition to please God, to delight himself in the Almighty, to be accepted of him, and to promote his glory in all the actions of his life.

Hence the law of God, which to others seems severe, becomes pleasant to him, and he delights in it after the inward man. That yoke, which others account heavy, he deems light, and thinks none of his commandments grievous. Hence, the worship of God, instead of being burdensome to him, is his pleasure. Prayer and praise, reading and hearing the word of the Lord, are his delightful exercises. He accounts a day in God's courts better than a thousand; and would prefer the humble office of a doorkeeper there, to the most splendid or profitable employments of the sinner.

That "Holiness to the Lord" should be

written on the door of the church, or of the closet, few will deny. We shall therefore not enlarge on the necessity of a holy temper in religious engagements. It is our design rather to show how religion is to influence the common concerns of life; how holiness, instead of being confined to sacred things, is to be mingled with our ordinary affairs, or according to our text, be "written on the bells of the horses."

The propriety of dwelling upon this will be sufficiently obvious to every considerate and consistent Christian, who has observed the state of things among the hearers of the Gospel at large. We see little practical religion among many nominal Christians and unstable professors. Even the most exemplary have cause to lament their deficiencies. Hence it is that God is but little glorified, compared with what might be expected. The domestic peace of professing families is too often broken. Fellow-Christians are too frequently grieved and stumbled. There is a notorious want of mutual affection in many religious societies, manifested by their contentions, and proneness to separate on trifling occasions. On these accounts the people of the world are confirmed in their prejudices against the doctrines of grace: they pretend that religion is a useless thing, or a mere cloak to cover bad intentions; and they even tax the doctrines of the Gospel with a licentious tendency. But whence do these evils arise? Nominal Christians are really ignorant of the nature of true religion; and too frequently, instead of using its doctrines and precepts for their sanctification, pervert its forms to an atonement for their vices; thus making the holy religion of Jesus an apology for immorality, and Christ himself "the minister of sin." Unstable professors have probably taken but a very partial and ineffectual view of the Gospel; Arminian prejudices cut off their strength, or Antinomian notions weaken their sense of obligation; or, enthusiastically, they make their feelings the rule of action, instead of the word of God. Some more serious and enlightened Christians fail through want of exercising faith on what they do know; for the Gospel does not operate like a charm on those who profess it: it has no further influence than as it is understood, remembered, trusted in, and applied to our feelings, tempers, conversation, and actions; and this particular and universal application of the principles of the Gospel, is what I consider as alluded to in the text.

Let us then consider, 1. What should

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be the Christian's temper and views with regard to himself, and

2. What should be his disposition and conduct towards his fellow-men.

1. Let the Christian remember that he is "the temple of the Holy Ghost;" and that the temple of the Lord must be holy. Being redeemed by the blood of Christ, he is no longer his own; his time, his talents, are not at his own disposal; they are dedicated things; they are "holiness to the Lord." Compelled by the mercies of God, he is to present his body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to the Lord, which is truly his reasonable service: whether he lives, he lives to the Lord; or whether he dies, he dies to the Lord; his aim and constant endeavor should be, that Christ may be glorified both by his life and death.

In subservience to this great design, he is to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," and imitate "the mind that was in him." Love is the leading grace, and will be followed by all the amiable train of Christian virtues. Humility is of essential importance, and will guard him against a thousand snares and dangers. Temperance in food, and in all other gratifications of the senses, is constantly necessary; for if the appetites be too much indulged, the interests of the soul cannot but suffer. Patience under trying circumstances, contentment with an humble lot, submission to the rod of a heavenly Father, are indispensably necessary, and are very eminent branches of Gospel-holiness. Crucifixion to this vain and sinful world is equally the believer's duty. He who lives in the exercise of that faith, which is the evidence of things not seen, will not cleave to the dust as his portion: he who believes the scriptural representation of eternal and heavenly things, and enjoys a good hope through grace of interest in them, will have his affections raised from the low objects of sense, and fixed, in some measure, on things above, where Christ is. He will therefore discover a holy indifference to the world; its wealth, honors, splendor, decorations, and amusements, will appear to him like the toys of children; and his near views of the eternal state, from which he is separated only by the thin partition of life, will convince him that neither the joys nor sorrows of the present state should much engage his heart; and thus will he conduct himself as "a stranger and a pilgrim;" thankful indeed for every comfortable accommodation, but still pressing on towards his heavenly home.

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2. Holiness to the Lord is to be exemplified in the relative duties of social life. In general, the Christian has two things to regard—to do no harm, and to do much good. It is necessary that he should be “blameless and harmless, as a child of God, without rebuke.” Many eyes are fixed on the professor of the Gospel; many wish and watch for his halting, and long for an occasion of glorying over him as a hypocrite. Great then is the need of watchfulness, and of peculiar exactness in his whole walk, that the enemy may be disappointed, and be obliged to say of the Christian as of Daniel, “We shall not find any occasion against this man, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.” And even in the matter of religion, his care must be, that “his good be not evil spoken of:” his zeal should not have a tendency to offend, but to conciliate; not to provoke, but to invite. The holy love of the Gospel “suffereth long and is kind; vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; becometh not unseemly; seeketh not her own; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.” Are we better informed than our neighbor? are we endued with knowledge? let us “show out of a good conversation our works with meekness of wisdom;” for the wisdom which is from above is pure and peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits. The holiness of the Gospel includes a pacific temper. “Following peace with all men” is connected with that “holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:” we must rather bear injuries than resent them; rather recede from our rights, than contentiously to maintain them; we are even to forgive our greatest enemies; if they hunger, to feed them; if they thirst, to give them drink, and thus heap coals of fire on their head, and melt them down by kindness.

Active benevolence is a necessary fruit of holiness. “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” is the grand comprehensive rule, the sum of social duty, both in the Old and New Testaments; but most strongly enforced by the example of Christ himself, who has made it the chief test of true religion: “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

But there are certain situations in life, wherein persons, being mutually related to each other, are expected more particularly to manifest the holiness of the Gospel. The first of these is the conjugal state. The Creator himself appointed this

union before the fall; but we being now all fallen creatures, much grace is needful to preserve such a temper and conduct as becomes Christian husbands and wives. So many trials, troubles, and crosses, necessarily occur in the married state, that much mutual forbearance and forgiveness, much self-denial, prudence, and kindness, are requisite. The Scriptures therefore largely inculcate the duties of the husband and the wife, and require their performance from evangelical motives, such as “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies—even as the Lord the church, for we are members of his body.” Eph. v. 25, &c. In like manner it is commanded, ver. 22, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord: for the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Savior of the body: therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands.” “Christians, thus married in grace as well as in nature, will be helpers of each other’s faith and joy in this world, and everlasting friends in a more exalted way of life in the kingdom of God. Grace in the heart will double every temporal mercy, soften every temporal misery, and lead them on, with united hands, towards the kingdom of heaven.”

The duties of parents and children should be performed in the spirit of holiness. Parents who fear the Lord themselves, will consider it their first and great concern to “bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” In early life, they must be restrained from the indulgence of self-will, and taught to submit to authority; for this is the very foundation of good education. They should be kept as much as possible from such companions and books as pollute the imagination, and inflame the passions. The Christian parent will be solicitous and assiduous in his endeavors to inculcate upon the youthful mind the great things of the Gospel; not only leading his charge to a place of worship where the truth is plainly and warmly preached; but endeavoring to enforce what is heard in public, by private instruction and application. The gentlest means of checking the corruptions of nature are to be preferred, for fathers are “not to provoke their children to wrath, lest they be discouraged;” but severer methods must sometimes be used; yet always with moderation, and without sinful anger. The example of a pious parent is the most effectual lesson, and when this is

united with fervent prayer and diligent instruction, it may be hoped that the Lord will crown with success.

Children are commanded "to obey their parents in the Lord, for this is right." The law of nature requires it, and especially the law of God; which also adds a singular promise of prosperity to the obedient. Parents are to be honored by submission to all their lawful commands; by attention to their exhortations; by a respectful and obliging deportment; and a steady concern for their interests and comfort, especially under the infirmities of age. In many cases, it will be necessary to comply with inconveniences, to submit to restraints, to conceal their mistakes, and, if needful, to support them in distress and poverty. And this is to be done "in the Lord," for the Lord's sake, and as part of that "holiness to the Lord" which forms the Christian character.

Masters and servants are to perform their several duties under the influence of the same holy principle. Servants need the humility which the Gospel inspires, to submit to the duties of their humble places, which are undoubtedly mortifying to the pride of corrupt nature. But as God has appointed a variety of stations in which some must serve, and others rule, it becomes a Christian servant to acquiesce in the divine will. Accordingly, the apostle exhorts servants "to be obedient to them that are their masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, *as unto Christ*; not with the eye service, as men-pleasers, but *as the servants of Christ*, doing the will of God from the heart; with good-will doing service, *as to the Lord*, and not to men." Eph. vi. 5, &c. Here the servant's duty is very fully expressed; and it is observable how often the apostle repeats the necessity of doing all *as to the Lord*—with a regard to his will and glory: and this is especially incumbent on pious and professing servants who know the Lord. A regard to this would effectually remove an objection frequently made, but very dishonorable to the Christian character, "that masters would rather have any servants than those who are professors."—Let "holiness to the Lord" be inscribed on the servant, and it exalts his humble lot; for in the eye of God, it is not the station that ennobles, but discharging the duties of it well; therefore St. Paul adds, "Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether bond or free."

Masters too are required, by the same authority, to "do the same thing to their servants, forbearing threatening, knowing that their master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him." ver. 9. Those who govern, while they justly require and expect that their business should be done diligently and faithfully, must not be proud, imperious or cruel; they should remember that the Lord only has made them superior; the case might have been reversed; and they should consider what treatment they would desire, were the stations to be exchanged. They should consult their interest and comfort, should allow them leisure for retirement, opportunity to hear the word, and contribute to their spiritual good, by the careful, pious, and constant observation of family worship.

The Christian *tradesman* is to remember his holy profession in the conduct of his affairs; to be diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. His religion is not to be confined to the church or the closet. Let holiness to the Lord be his motto in the shop, in the market, in the field. Strict honesty in all his dealings is essentially necessary; for to defraud, deceive, or overreach a neighbor; to take the advantage of his ignorance; to seek immoderate profits; rashly to contract debts without the prospect of payment; with a thousand other abominations occurring among the men of the world; are doubly shocking and abominable in the professor of the Gospel. The religious tradesman is an honorable character, but the dishonest professor is of all creatures the most detestable and injurious.

Let the *wealthy Christian* write the motto of our text upon his bags of gold—"Holiness to the Lord;" let him think it as much his privilege as his duty, to consecrate the use of his riches to him, who alone gave him power to get wealth; whose protection is needful for its preservation; without whose blessing it cannot be enjoyed; who gave it him for the purpose of enabling him to do good; and who will require an account of the manner in which his talents have been employed.

Let the *subject* remember his Christian character; to "fear God," and to "honor the king," are duties coupled together by the apostle. To pray for kings and rulers, and to seek the peace of our country, are so evidently commanded in Scripture, that none but an infidel can dispute the obligation. Civil magistracy is of God, and an unspeakable blessing to any country; the

consistent Christian therefore will obey the laws, and be subject to the higher powers, not only for wrath (or fear of punishment) but also for conscience' sake; he will render to God the things that are God's, and to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's—to all their dues; tribute, custom, fear, and honor; and thus prove himself "a Christian patriot."

Thus have we briefly exhibited "the beauty of holiness," and attempted to show that universal holiness becomes the profession of the Gospel. This will probably be denied by few; but a cold assent to the necessity and propriety of holiness, is by no means enough. Are *we* holy? It is the solemn determination of heaven, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Let us therefore not be deceived; what a man soweth he shall surely reap. A soul unsanctified can never gain admittance into heaven, the residence of a holy God, holy angels, and holy saints. Let such immediately flee to the Savior for pardon, and implore the aid of his Spirit to make them holy.

Let believers lament the remains of unholy tempers: let them hunger and thirst after more holiness; let them live a life of faith in Christ; and be daily *looking to Jesus*—so beholding his glory, as to experience an increasing conformity to his holy image, till they come at last to those pure regions, where "Holiness to the Lord" is indeed universal, complete, and everlasting.

PRAYER.—O God, who art glorious in holiness, thou hast said unto us, Be ye holy, for I am holy. Holiness, O Lord, becometh thy house; and it is thy royal will and pleasure that all who name the name of Christ should depart from iniquity. O God of peace, be pleased, by thy Spirit, to sanctify us wholly! and may our whole spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ! Teach us to love thee supremely, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. May we love thy law, thy house, thy worship, thy people! and may we manifest the influence of Christian principles in our own houses, in our families, and in all the concerns of social life! As parents and children, husbands and wives, masters and servants, may we adorn and recommend the doctrine of Christ! Let holiness to the Lord be our maxim in the church, in the family, and in the world;—may all we have and are be devoted to the Lord! and knowing that we are not our own, but bought with a price, may we not live to ourselves, but to the Lord, and glorify God with our bodies and spirits, which are the Lord's! Thus may we proceed, looking to Jesus, and so beholding his glory, as to be gradually transformed into his image, until we arrive in Heaven, to be with him where he is, to see him as he is, and to be perfectly like him for ever and ever! Amen.

SERMON LXIII.

A GOOD HOPE, THROUGH GRACE

2 Thess. ii. 16. And good hope through Grace.

THESE words are part of an affectionate prayer, offered up by the apostle of the Gentiles, in behalf of the Thessalonian Christians; and we may obtain great assistance in praying for ourselves, from such passages as this; being assured that we cannot ask amiss, if we ask in the words of the Holy Spirit himself. It is addressed to the Lord Jesus Christ, equally with God the Father; and so affords proof, among many others, of the divinity of our Savior, who could not otherwise hear or answer our prayers. *Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, who hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and GOOD HOPE THROUGH GRACE, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work.* Comfort and steadiness in religion are the blessings he prays for; and he takes encouragement in asking for them, from the love of God already manifested in the consolation and hope they had enjoyed—*a good hope through grace.*

Among the various and precious blessings of the Gospel-salvation, this is one of the chief. The value and use of hope, in the conduct of human affairs in general, is well known; it is this that stimulates man to action, reconciles him to suffering, and proves the very cordial of life: but the good hope we are now treating of is as much superior to this as heaven is superior to earth, or eternity to time; it is a hope full of glory and immortality. May the God of hope fill us with joy and peace in believing, and render our present service the means either of exciting or confirming this good hope in all our souls! My design in this discourse is simply to show, that

A good hope, through grace, is an invaluable blessing to a Christian, both in life and death.

Now this good hope includes several important ideas, which are not always duly considered.

1. A serious, believing, habitual regard to a future state, according to the representations made of it in the sacred Scriptures. No atheist, denying the being of God, no deist, rejecting the Bible, can possess this hope. We owe it all to the gracious revelation of God in the Gospel, wherein life and immortality are brought to light. Without these, all is vague, and

dark, and doubtful; but with God's word in our hands, we learn the nature of our own immortal spirits; the certainty of their existing separately from our bodies after death; the resurrection of these mortal bodies from the grave; and the complete blessedness of the saints in the kingdom of God for ever.

Giving credit to the testimony of God on these important points, the believer entertains a *habitual* regard to the eternal world, and can in some measure say with the apostle, *I look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.* And this habitual respect to future things will be discovered by a serious regard to the Lord's day, to the ordinances of his house, to the Scriptures of truth, to secret prayer, and all those means of spiritual information and improvement, which are connected with this hope.

2. Preparatory to this hope, there must be an humbling conviction of our being sinners, and of our danger and helplessness as such. The law must do its office, in convincing us of our guilt and misery, and exciting in us a sincere desire to flee from the wrath to come; for without this, it is difficult to conceive how the hope of salvation can be entertained, as it implies a deliverance from the dreadful and deserved consequences of our rebellion against God. We can therefore scarcely suppose a person to know any thing of hope, who never knew what it was to fear; for the hope of the Gospel is properly opposed to the fear of the law. And this leads us to observe, that,

3. This hope implies some acquaintance with the glorious Gospel of salvation by Jesus Christ. It is called, Col. i. 23, "*The hope of the Gospel*," a hope derived solely from its discoveries and promises; it is a hope inseparably connected with "the faith of the Gospel;" and in this it differs essentially from a hope arising from mistake, from superstition, or from the partiality of self-love.

The term *a good hope*, seems designed to distinguish it from every kind of hope, which is not good. We read in the book of Job, chap. viii. 13. of *the hypocrite's hope*; and it is said of it, that *it shall perish, and be cut off*; and that "his trust,"—his confidence and security, *shall be as a spider's web*, it shall be swept away with the besom of destruction. In another place (Job xxvii. 8.) it is said—"*What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?*"

A hypocrite may have a hope, such as it is; and he may be a gainer by it; he may gain the applause of men; but when death comes, when God taketh away his soul, what becomes of his hope? it fails him when he wants it most; for the righteous hath hope in his death; but "the wicked is driven away in his wickedness." Of how great consequence then is it to have a *good hope*!

Let us therefore consider on what accounts the hope of the Gospel is called a *good hope*. And there are three things which entitle it to that name; for the *object* of it is good—the *foundation* of it is good—and the *effect* of it is good.

1. The *object* of this hope is good—supremely good. All hope has something good for its object, something at least accounted good. But the object of the believer's hope is eminently, infinitely good. It is none of the gay and dazzling objects of sense; not worldly honor, nor filthy lucre, nor sensual delight; but the pure, spiritual, exalted felicities of the heavenly world; those pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore; those objects which the word of God reveals, and which faith discerns; for "faith is the substance (or basis) of things hoped for;" faith gives credit to the testimony of God, concerning what he has prepared for them that love him; and hope expects to enjoy them in God's good time.

It does not indeed fully appear as yet what we shall be; the particulars of our celestial enjoyments are not disclosed; but they are "ready to be revealed in the last time." This we know, that death, dreadful as it is to nature, will be friendly to the believer, in releasing him from that body of sin and death, in which he now groans, being burdened. To be "absent from the body," is to be "present with the Lord." And O! who can tell the blessedness of that condition! It is a great thing to be freed from all pain and disease—to have "all tears wiped away from our eyes"—to be where there is "no more death, neither sorrow nor crying." But it is a thing unspeakably greater and more glorious, to be "before the throne of God and the Lamb;" it must be infinitely delightful to be "*with Christ*"—to be "for ever with the Lord." This was St. Paul's highest idea of heaven, "to be for ever with Christ;" and our Lord himself, in his prayer for his disciples, expresses no higher notion of happiness than this—"that they may be with me where I am, to behold my glory," John xvii. 24. Here in the glass of faith we behold that glory obscurely and imper-

fectly; but there we shall him "as he is"—"see him face to face"—in "our flesh we shall see God," or, see God in our flesh, Immanuel God with us.

How good, then, how glorious is the hope! How pleasant will it be to receive perpetual additions to our stock of divine knowledge; how delightful to feel ourselves perfectly conformed to the image of God; how satisfying to be always engaged in the divine service of our Redeemer; how charming to enjoy the honorable society of glorious angels, of the pure spirits of ransomed sinners; how cheering the thought of rejoining those dear and pious relations and friends, who are gone before us to glory, or who shall quickly follow us thither after a short separation! O how good a hope is this, which includes objects so great, so glorious as these!

2. There is another reason why this hope may be called good, and a most important reason it is.—The *foundation* of it is good: for without a good foundation for our hope, whatever objects it may embrace, it is so far from good, that it will make us ashamed, and issue in confusion and disappointment.

Nothing is more common than to profess a hope of going to heaven; it is so common, that, "as I hope to be saved," is a proverbial saying, even in the mouths of the most profane:—a sad sign, however, that those who use the phrase in a light and trifling manner have no part nor lot in this matter. A good hope *through grace*. Mark well, the word—"through grace,"—a hope built on the free sovereign favor of God, through the satisfaction of Christ—a hope that rests upon Jesus, the only sure foundation for sinners—a hope that relies on the precious promises of a covenant God. Only such a hope as this can be called "good;" and we may consider this hope *through grace* as opposed both to our own *merit* and *demerit*.

A hope through grace is opposed to *human merit*—that fatal "stumbling-stone" both to ancient Jews and modern Christians. How often do we find poor ignorant people, when sick and dying, express their hope of going to heaven, because "they never did any harm"—"paid every one his own,"—or "were decent and regular in going to church," &c. But thus to build our hope on ourselves, is to betray an entire ignorance of the Gospel, which affords no hope for a sinner, except in and through Jesus. Thus to hope in ourselves is utterly to subvert and destroy the whole plan of Salvation, as St. Paul speaks, Gal. ii. 21. "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if

righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." There is a general disposition among all mankind to put their trust in themselves and their own works; and though there is a multitude of different religions in the world, which are contrary to each other in many things, yet they generally agree in this—to bring something of their own as the ground of acceptance with God. The religion of the Gospel is totally the reverse. It allows of no boasting; it teaches the best saint to call himself "an unprofitable servant," and to say, "God forbid that I should glory in any thing, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ." Those, therefore, whose hope is derived from self, are antichristian in their plan, and overthrow, as much as in them lies, the plan of the Gospel—they "frustrate the grace of God"—make it void—set it aside, leave no place for it: they make Christ "to have died in vain;" they do not say so with their lips, but by their false faith and false hopes; for if there be any thing in ourselves to hope in, the death of Christ, who is our hope, and who became such by dying for us, is, of course, a needless thing. And this is a dreadful blasphemy. But it is a blasphemy that those who are taught of God cannot be guilty of; for they clearly see that Jesus is the only hope of a sinner; and, with St. Paul, account their former gain, loss; and reckon all things to be dung and dross, that they may know Christ, and be found in him. Phil. iii.

As this hope through grace is opposed to the *merit of works*, so it is also exalted above the *demerit of sin*. We are sinners; guilty, helpless sinners. And shall *sinners* hope for heaven? Shall vile rebels, who deserve hell, hope for glory? It is written, that "the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven"—that "there shall in nowise enter into it any thing that defileth, or worketh abomination," &c. How then can wretches so impure, so vile, so abominable in the eyes of God, and in their own eyes, entertain a hope of happiness!

To all this we oppose the word *grace*; this hope, remember, is *through grace*. We are "saved by grace." "Grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life." We are ungodly by nature: but "in due time Christ died for the ungodly." We were "enemies;" but when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." Surely it may well be said—"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound;" and, "they that receive abundance of grace, and the gift of

righteousness, shall reign in life, by Jesus Christ," Rom. v. 16, 17. Thus St. Paul opposes the hope by grace, to the awful demerit of sin, Titus iii. 3—7. "We ourselves were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, &c. but after that the kindness and love of God our Savior towards man appeared, not by the works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us—that, being justified by *grace*, we should be made heirs, according to the *hope* of eternal life." Jesus Christ is so entirely the ground for our hope, that he takes one of his gracious names from being so; he is called, 1 Tim. i. 1, "*Our hope*;" and in Col. i. 27, "Christ in you—the hope of glory."

The good hope we are speaking of, derives much of its stability from the promises of God in his word. Faith accepts God's bond, and hope waits for its payment. "Remember," said the holy psalmist, "*the word* unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope," Ps. cxix. 49. All the good things which believers expect are promised. We have exceeding great and precious promises, which are all yea and amen, in Christ Jesus. On these the Lord causes his people to hope: it is the work of the Holy Spirit to enable us to do this, according to Rom. xv. 13. "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." There is such a privilege as *abounding in hope*,—having an abundant hope, a "lively hope, the full assurance of hope:" so that not one doubt or fear remains as to the final attainment of its objects; and wherever this is, it is through the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit. This was the language of an ancient believer, 1 Chron. xvii. 23. "Therefore now, Lord, let the thing that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant be established for ever, and *do as thou hast said*:" or, as he expresses it in another place, Ps. cxix. 116, "Uphold me according to thy word; and let me not be ashamed of thy hope." This is indeed a good hope—a hope that will never make us ashamed.

3. The hope we are describing is good on a third account.—*The effect of it is good*. The man who possesses it is the better as well as the happier for it. St. John says, "every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure"—he endeavors, by divine grace, to attain all possible purity in heart and life, in conformity to the pure and holy Jesus, who will admit none but holy ones into his blissful presence.

Gratitude to the kind author of his hope, to whom he owes unspeakable obligations, constrains him to avoid the sins which he hates, and to perform the obedience which he loves. "Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation," saith the psalmist, and he adds, "I have done thy commandments," Ps. cxix. 166. This hope renders the Christian active in the service of Christ, and for the good of his fellow-men; for he is assured that, though there is no merit in his best performances, yet the same grace, to which he owes his good hope, will crown his labors of love with a gratuitous reward; inasmuch as "a cup of cold water given to a disciple, because he belongs to Christ, shall not be forgotten." Thus our adorable Redeemer himself, "for the joy that was set before him," was full of zeal in the work of his heavenly Father.

This good hope must be conducive to holiness, because it diminishes the temptations arising from worldly objects. These appear wonderfully great and glorious to the little mind of the natural man: he knows no greater: but what are the most splendid vanities of earth and time to the eye of faith, which penetrates into the unseen world, and beholds objects too big for utterance; compared with which the dazzling glories of the world die like a dim taper in the blaze of noon. Thus Moses reasoned, and the court of Pharaoh lost all its attractions; hence, even afflictions and reproaches, connected with the "recompense of the reward," became his deliberate choice.

But how good is the effect of this hope under the pressure of calamity! Is the Christian a soldier?—Hope is his helmet; defending his head in the day of battle, till he leaves the field, more than a conqueror, through the love of Jesus. Is the Christian a mariner? Hope is "the anchor of his soul, both sure and steadfast, entering into that which is within the vail;" this anchor fixes on the exalted and glorified Jesus, the advocate of believing sinners; and who is, therefore, able to save them to the uttermost. The hope of glory reconciles the suffering Christian to his painful lot; we therefore read, 1 Thess. i. 3, of "*the patience of hope*;" because hope makes the possessor of it patient and resigned to all the will of God, believing that "all things work together for good." Hence the primitive disciples, who "endured a great fight of afflictions, took joyfully the spoiling of their goods." Why? because "they knew that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance"—a substantial treasure prepared for them by divine grace, of

which they had already the earnest, and which could never be lost, or taken away from them. This good hope taught St. Paul to reckon all his apostolic sufferings "light and momentary," when poised in the scale with "the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory," reserved in heaven for him. With this hope, the Christian, to use the words of an elegant writer—"greatly disdains to wallow in the puddle of sin. The darts of temptation fall ineffectual to the ground. In danger he is courageous; in sorrow he is moderate; in duty he is diligent; in tribulation he is patient; and even in death he smiles."

CONCLUSION.

WE proposed, in the beginning of this discourse, to show that *a good hope, through grace, is an invaluable blessing to a Christian, both in life and death.* And who but the infidel doubts this? the *living* infidel I mean; for the dying infidel, with every other dying man, must own its unspeakable value. To obtain this, then, should be the first and chief pursuit of life. And have *we* obtained it? Hast *thou*, whose eyes survey, or whose ears listen to this discourse—hast *thou* obtained this good hope?

Permit me to say, that as "salvation is far from the wicked," so likewise is "the hope of salvation." What the wicked and the worldly man calls hope is nothing but *presumption*. The sensual sinner, who is living in the lusts of the flesh, can have no scriptural hope of heaven; for only "the pure in heart shall see God." The earthly-minded sinner, whose soul cleaves to the dust, and who embraces the dunghill as his portion, cannot hope for heaven; he must be born again, or he can never see the kingdom of God. In vain the self-righteous pharisee boasts of his hope; his hope is no better than the spider's web: it will not abide the day of trial. He who hopes in himself, and not in Christ, will be found like the foolish builder, whose house was erected on the yielding sand: when the rain descends, and the winds blow, and the floods come, the house must fall; and great will be the fall of it. Nor a whit better will the hope of the hypocrite prove, whose religion was only a mask, intended to conceal his beloved sins; the all-searching eye of Christ will penetrate through the thickest disguise, and the holy judge will say, "Depart from me, I never knew thee, thou worker of iniquity." Almighty God! undeceive these mistaken and presumptuous men! deliver them from their fond delusions! destroy their false hopes;

and bring them, as humble penitents, to thy feet, that they may obtain forgiving mercy, receive thy sanctifying Spirit, and thus acquire "a good hope through grace!"

Christian! examine thy hope. Is it a good hope? Is the object of it good? Yes; it is being with Christ; and what can be conceived of so good as that? Is the *foundation* of thy hope good? Look well to that. Is it Jesus alone? He is our hope. This is a sure foundation, a tried stone. He that believeth on him shall not be ashamed. Inquire farther. Is the *effect* of thy hope good? What influence hath it on thy heart and life? Does it purify thee? Does it make thee thankful? Does it make thee active in duty—firm in temptation—patient in afflictions? These are its proper effects, and where these are found, they are solid evidences of the genuine nature of religious hope.

This hope, so useful and comfortable in life, displays its full value in the article of death. "The righteous hath hope in his death." Then this good hope is worth a thousand thousand worlds. How many believers, in all ages, have experienced its cordial support, when flesh and heart were failing! They could, with perfect composure and satisfaction, commit their departing spirit into the faithful hands of Jesus, saying, "I know whom I have believed;" and when the poor diseased body was about to become a lifeless lump of clay, a wretched mass of corruption, they could say, each one for himself, "I believe in the resurrection of the body." Christ has said, "I will raise it up at the last day." He has promised it, and he will perform it. I quit this "vile body," in hope of "the manifestation of the Son of God," when it shall be freed from the bondage of corruption; when Jesus, in the great day of his triumph, shall change this vile body, and shall make it like unto his own most glorious body; for them that sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him. In sure and certain hope of this complete and everlasting salvation, I resign both soul and body into thy faithful hands. Amen.

Such is "the good hope through grace, which a real Christian is warranted to entertain; which he glorifies God by entertaining; and which it should be his daily prayer and endeavor to entertain." To this purpose the apostle exhorts the Hebrews (chap. vi. 11.) "We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope to the end,"—intimating, that a full and complete hope of eternal life is attainable; and that, ordinarily, it is to be expected only by the

diligent Christian, who abounds (ver. 10.) in the labors of love, showed to the name of Jesus by ministering to his saints. Relying only on Jesus; living daily on his fullness; aiming continually at his glory; may we abound in this good hope more and more, even to the end of life; till we "*inherit the promises*"—till hope be exchanged for the full fruition of all those unspeakable glories, which God hath prepared for them that love him.

"How oft have sin and Satan strove
To rend my soul from thee, my God!
But everlasting is thy love,
And Jesus seals it with his blood.

Amidst temptations, sharp and long,
My soul to this dear refuge flies;
Hope is my anchor, firm and strong,
While tempests blow and billows rise.

The Gospel bears my spirits up;
A faithful and unchanging God
Lays the foundation for my hope,
In oaths, and promises, and blood."

WATTS.

PRAYER.—O THOU God of Hope, fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that so we may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. May we possess the hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ, who is our hope, our only hope! In ourselves, as sinners, we are hopeless and helpless; but blessed be God, for Jesus Christ, the true Foundation,—on him alone would we build, gladly renouncing all confidence in the flesh? May our hope be a *good hope*,—a hope derived from grace alone! O let us not deceive ourselves with a vain presumptuous hope,—the hope of the hypocrite and the formalist, which will fail them at the last: but may Christ be our hope, Christ in and with us, the hope of glory! and may this hope make us patient in the day of adversity, so that we may account all our sufferings light and momentary, when compared with the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, reserved in Heaven for us. Having this hope, may we be purified from all defilements of flesh and spirit, be active in duty, firm in temptation, and patient in affliction! and O that we may experience its cordial support, when heart and flesh are failing, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life! Amen.

SERMON LXIV.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS.

Hebrews xii. 2. Looking unto Jesus.

THIS short sentence comprises the principal business of the Christian life; for if we are Christians indeed, "the life which we now live in the flesh, we live by the faith of the Son of God," and the proper exercise of faith is "looking to Jesus."

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St. Paul introduces these words for the purpose of encouraging the Hebrew believers in their Christian course. Having in the former chapter, illustrated the effects of faith by many historical examples, he proceeds to make a practical application of the whole. He would have them consider the ancient worthies, who lived and died in faith, as a numerous cloud of witnesses, spectators of their exertions in the same race; and while thus engaged in pressing forwards towards the goal, to keep their eye upon Christ—*looking to Jesus*—looking off from sin, and self, and the world; from every thing that would retard or dishearten: he would have them keep their eye intent upon the suffering Savior, who is both "the author and the finisher of faith."

My design in the present discourse is, to show that believers in Christ are to have a constant and uniform regard to him, in the whole of their Christian walk; and that this is productive of the most solid advantages. In order to this, I shall show, that,

I. Jesus Christ, and him crucified, is the principal object presented to us in the word of God.

II. A constant regard to him, as there revealed, is the first and chief business of the Christian.

III. I shall point out some of the rich advantages which the believer obtains by so doing.

I. Jesus Christ, and him crucified, is the principal object presented to us in the word of God.

The whole Scripture, the Old as well as the New Testament, may be called "the word of Christ," which is to "dwell in us richly." Jesus Christ is the substance of the predictions, promises, and ordinances of the most ancient times. We are expressly told, that "Moses wrote of him;" that the law had "a shadow of good things to come;" and that "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The prophets, priests, and kings of old, were types or emblems of Christ, in his mediatorial offices. Their numerous sacrifices and offerings prefigured that one great sacrifice which he made of himself on the cross, by which he "put away sin," and "brought in everlasting righteousness." And the more enlightened of the Old Testament saints looked forward to the advent of Christ with faith and delight. Abraham eagerly desired to see "his day; and he saw it, and was glad." Moses prayed, "I beseech thee show me thy glory," and was gratified with a view of it. He had such knowledge of the expected Savior, that

"he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Isaiah had "a vision of the Lord of Hosts," in the temple; and the New Testament assures us, that it was "the glory of Christ" which he saw. The Spirit of Christ, inspiring the prophets, "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow;" and our Lord, when reasoning with two of his disciples after his resurrection, referred to their writings, "and beginning at Moses and all the prophets (and the psalms) he expounded unto them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself."

It is still more evident that Jesus Christ is the substance of the *Gospel*; for it is "the Gospel of Christ." Preaching the Gospel was originally the same as "preaching Christ," or "preaching the cross." Jesus Christ was not the *occasional* subject of the primitive ministry (as of some modern divines, two or three times a-year, at particular festivals) but "*daily*, in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ." And one of these preachers declares his resolution to preach nothing else. "I am determined," said he to the Corinthians, "not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified;" as if he had said, "When I came to your great and polite city, where many are fond of refined speculations, I was resolved not to change my usual method of preaching; I would appear to know, and employ myself in making known, nothing among you but Jesus, as the Messiah; even that crucified person, against whom so many scandals are propagated; for I know that though the preaching of the cross be foolishness to them that perish, it is the power of God to them which are saved: I therefore preach and glory in nothing but the cross of Christ."

As the apostles made Christ the subject of their discourses, so was he the substance of that knowledge by which the primitive Christians were distinguished. This is intimated in Eph. iv. 20; where the apostle urges them to distinguish themselves from the unconverted Gentiles, by the holiness of their behavior, as they were so much distinguished from them by their evangelical knowledge. The heathen were sunk in sensuality and profligacy—but, saith he, "ye have not so *learned Christ*—seeing ye have heard him, and have been instructed in him, as the truth is in Jesus." This passage shows that Jesus Christ was both the *author* and the *subject* of their religious knowledge; the

sum of their learning was "the truth as it is in Jesus;" their teacher was "Christ" himself, by his word and Spirit; and the genuine effect of such learning was, that holiness of character which distinguished them from all persons who were ignorant of the Gospel.

Jesus Christ is so eminently the grand object presented to us in the word, that the doctrine of justification by faith in *him*, is called, in Gal. iii. 1, *the truth*. St. Paul, reproving the Galatians for their instability, says, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey *the truth*, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" False teachers, it appears, had perverted their minds as to the great point, the justification of a sinner by Christ alone, and not by the works of the law; and this he calls "the truth," because it is the leading, the fundamental truth of the Gospel; and he blames them for departing from it, because they had been properly instructed by the apostles; the Gospel had been faithfully preached to them; and what was it?—"Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth" by the preaching of the Gospel; and that in so distinct and lively a manner, that it was like the exhibition of Jesus Christ "before their eyes." The Scripture proves our point; it proves that Christ crucified is the prominent object which the Gospel presents to our view. And if it be so, then it will naturally follow, in the next place,

II. That a constant regard to him is the first and chief business of the Christian.

The doctrine of "the Gospel is now made known to all nations, for the obedience of faith." This regard to Christ was described, even in the predictions of the Old Testament, by the same figurative expression as that in our text—a looking to Jesus. "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth," said Jehovah by the prophet Isaiah, (Isa. xlv. 22.) where Christ is plainly spoken of as "the Lord our righteousness." And in chapter lxxv. 1, where the calling of the Gentiles is predicted, it is written, "I said, Behold me! Behold me! to a nation that was not called by my name." What is this but the genuine language of the Gospel, and which John, the harbinger of Christ, actually used, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" No doubt the faithful, among the Jews, looked further than to the altar, and the victim burning upon it; they, who "looked for redemption in Israel," extended their believing views to the great propitiation of

the Son of God. For this reason they were commanded, whenever they prayed, in whatever country their lot was cast, to direct their eyes towards the temple at Jerusalem; because that glorious edifice was the type of the infinitely more glorious Redeemer, the temple of the indwelling Deity, who is the advocate and intercessor of all his believing followers. In like manner, the refractory prophet Jonah, who, having deserted from the appointed duty of going to Nineveh, was cast into the sea, and swallowed by a great fish, in the extremity of his distresses, uses these words—"Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple." It was the Savior, signified by the temple, to whom he directed the eyes of his faith: he looked, and he was delivered. Thus should all distressed sinners act. This is the only safe and certain way of obtaining relief. "I will look," "I will look again, and again, toward thy holy temple." With the encouragement afforded by the Gospel, we may look into heaven itself; yea, we may "have boldness to enter into the holiest of all, by the blood of Jesus." Our Savior himself interprets the ordinance of the brazen serpent in the wilderness, to which the wounded Israelites look for healing, as a type of himself; for, said he, "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." Thus he declares himself to be the object presented by the Gospel, and faith in him as a looking upon that object; for he adds, "that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life," John iii. 14, 15. Looking to Jesus, is the only cure for a wounded spirit. This is one of the plainest and most encouraging illustrations of the nature and effect of faith. Faith, strictly speaking, is believing the divine testimony, believing the truth, believing the Gospel. The Gospel presents to our minds Jesus as an all-sufficient Savior. Faith credits the report of the Gospel concerning him: and in consequence thereof, turns off from every other object of trust and confidence, and looks to Jesus, hoping for mercy, pardon, grace, and everlasting life, from him.

That looking to Jesus is the first, the chief business of a Christian, is evident from the scriptural representations of the Christian life. When the Jews asked Christ, "What must we do, that we may work the works of God," or perform the most acceptable service to him? he replied, "This is the work of God, that ye believe in him whom he hath sent." St. John,

speaking of that obedience which is pleasing in his sight, 1 John iii. 22, 23, says, "This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another." Here he makes faith and love the sum of the Christian's duty. The same idea is strongly supported by that expression of St. Paul, in his earnest prayers for the Ephesians, (ch. iii. 17.) "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." This denotes the most close and intimate friendship, union, and influence; and this is to be enjoyed in the exercise of faith.

Several of the descriptive names and characters which Christ, for our instruction and comfort, has assumed, confirm this proposition. For instance, he is the "sun of righteousness"—the "light of the world"—the "light of life;" all persons, then, but those spiritually blind, prize and rejoice in his light. He is the "foundation" which God hath laid in Zion; no man, taught of God, will presume to lay another; this is the tried stone, the sure corner-stone; and to them that believe it is precious; on this the believer rests, with confidence, all the weight of his eternal concerns. The same constant regard to him is implied in those places where he is represented as our *food*. He is the "bread of life;" the bread that came down from heaven; the bread that secures the everlasting life of him that partakes of it. On this sacred food the believer daily feeds; it is pleasant as the sweetest bread; and he is nourished by it unto eternal life. This plain, instructive emblem the Savior has wisely chosen, and adopted it in the sacrament of his supper; the observance of this ordinance is one of the distinguishing badges of our belonging to him; and, while the world continues, will remain a demonstration of that truth for which we plead—that a constant regard to Jesus Christ is the principal duty of the Christian life. "Do this in remembrance of me."

This might be farther proved by observing, that such was the regard which the primitive believers had to a crucified Redeemer, that one of them says, 2 Cor. iv. 10, "We always bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." They carried it about in their memories, in their meditations, in their conversations, and in their conformity to it under their persecutions. We also should constantly recollect the death of Jesus; his wonderful love in dying for us; the wonderful blessings we derive from his death; and, among others, a death unto sin and the world by

virtue of it. And this may lead us, in the last place,

III. To point out some of the rich advantages which the believers obtain by looking unto Jesus.

The first of these is *peace*—peace with God, and peace in the conscience. True peace comes from God the Father, through the blood of Jesus; and can only be enjoyed by looking to him. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Those mistaken persons, who, being alarmed on account of their sins, have recourse to their own religious duties, their prayers, their fastings, their charity, and amendment of life; and hope by these to avert the wrath of God and procure his favor, must be told, that this is not “the way of peace.” It is true, that duties and reformation are necessary, but not as the means or cause of peace with God; peace with him is first to be sought as procured by Christ, as proclaimed by the Gospel, and as the free gift of heaven to all who truly believe it; the duties of religion will follow after, as the effect follows the cause. Nothing but the blood of Christ can “purge the conscience” from guilt, and this can effectually do it; for such is its divine efficacy, that it “cleanseth from all sin;” and the person who is enabled to put his trust in it may say, with the holy boldness of St. Paul, “Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died.”

Humiliation is another advantage derived from looking to Jesus. The heart of man is naturally proud; and will never be effectually humbled, but by a believing contemplation of the greatest example of humility that ever appeared in the world. A representation of the stupendous majesty of the Almighty God humbled the heart of Job, and obliged him to say, “Behold I am vile.” A view of the starry heavens induced the Psalmist to cry, “Lord, what is man!” But a sight, by faith, of the Son of God, laying aside his glory, stooping to earth, wearing a human body, submitting to poverty, to disgrace, and to death, for us, will be the most sovereign remedy against sinful pride: That humiliation, especially, which becomes us as rebellious creatures, will be best promoted by looking at a suffering Savior, bending under the load of our guilt in the garden and on the cross. Who can make a mock at sin, that beholds the awful severity of God in punishing it in the person of his innocent Son our surety? Who can be proud when he sees the Lord of all destitute of a place where to lay his head; enduring poverty and

shame, and pouring contempt on all the enjoyments of the world, voluntarily resigned for our sakes?

This also affords the best lesson of *patience*; and for this purpose, particularly, we are exhorted in the text to look to Jesus; for, it is added, “he endured the cross, despising the shame.” Never did the world behold such an example of patience as the Lamb of God, “who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not,” but on the contrary, prayed for his murderers. If we would be Christians indeed, we must “arm ourselves with the same mind;” and, according to his direction, deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow him.

Love is the fulfilling of the Law, and the most powerful principle of Gospel holiness. But how shall this be obtained? We answer, By looking unto Jesus. “We love him because he first loved us.” “He loved us, and gave himself for us.” “He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood.” “Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend;” but the love of Christ was far greater, for, “when we were yet enemies, Christ died for us.” Now when this love of God our Savior is “shed abroad in the heart,” when we have reason to conclude that “Christ loved us, and gave himself for us,” it cannot but kindle a flame of grateful affection towards him. Of so great importance in true religion is the exercise of love to Christ, that St. Paul pronounces the man to be “accursed,” who is destitute of it. (1 Cor xvi. 22.) For the same reason, our Lord thrice repeated to his servant Peter the pathetic question—“Lovest thou me?” Happy the man who can answer as he did: “Thou, that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee.” This was the generous principle that actuated the first disciples in their extensive labors, and supported them under their heavy trials—“the love of Christ constrained them.” As far as our Christianity is genuine, it will resemble theirs; and induce us to yield ourselves to the Lord; and to act as no longer our own, but his; bought with a price, and under the strongest obligations “to perfect holiness, in his fear.”

The love of our brother is closely connected with the love of God; the former can never exist without the latter, and always accompanies it. Our gracious Lord gave this injunction to his disciples, “This is my commandment, that ye love one an-

other, as I have loved you." "His love, when experienced by his followers, would be imitated in their affection for each other; and for this purpose he condescended to wash their feet on the evening before his passion. In like manner, we are exhorted to be "kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us." Looking to Jesus, the friend of sinners, who came to seek and to save the lost, who went about doing good, and who laid down his life for his enemies, is the most effectual means in the world of curing the selfishness of our hearts, of softening the asperity of our tempers, and of exciting compassion and benevolence in our souls, towards all our fellow-men.

Looking to Jesus is the best expedient to destroy our inordinate regard to this present world. Christ was dead to it, and separate from it; and he says to his followers, "Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." The gaudy vanities of earth never attracted the heart of Jesus, nor will they make much impression on us, while we are enabled to keep our eyes on him. St. Paul declares, that "by the cross of Christ, he was crucified to the world, and the world crucified to him." The more glory we discern in our Lord, the less shall we fancy in the world. It is by looking to him, that it becomes, in our esteem, a dead and worthless thing, unfit for our portion, and insufficient for our happiness. A glance of his glory, and a sense of interest in his favor, will make us indifferent alike to its smiles and its frowns; and all the glittering objects that men pursue with such extreme avidity will appear as unworthy of our affections as the painted toys of little children.

There is one more advantage to be expected from looking to Jesus; an advantage of such magnitude, that we may challenge the universe to equal it, and that is, ability to meet death with calmness and joy. Here is a triumph peculiar to the Gospel; a triumph far superior to those of kings and conquerors; a triumph over the king of terrors; for "the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." Dreadful and burdensome beyond description is the terror felt by many, in the anticipation of the fatal hour: and where shall we find a sufficient antidote to the fear of death, but in looking to Jesus? It formed a part of his gracious design in taking flesh and blood, that "through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death; and deliver them, who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to

bondage." Looking to Jesus, who has borne the whole of the punishment due to our sins, we are no longer to consider it as *penal*; this is the *sting* of death, which he has extracted; he has rendered this fearful serpent harmless; he has "abolished death;" it is become no longer loss, but gain; no longer an enemy, but a friend; hence, thousands of believers, in every age of the Church, have met death with a placid smile, and looking to Jesus, have longed to depart, to be with him.

And thus have we taken a view of what we conceive to be the principal business of the Christian life,—a constant regard to Jesus, as the chief object presented to us in the holy word. Such we are persuaded is the *religion of the New Testament, the religion of Christ*. It cannot be improper for each one to ask himself—"Is this my religion?" In my religion is Jesus "the alpha and omega, the first and the last?" Is he my teacher, my sacrifice, my Lord? Do I esteem him very highly for his own sake, for his love's sake, for his work's sake? Is he the rock on which I build; the refuge to which I fly; the food on which I live; the fountain in which I wash? And do I, by looking to him, obtain peace within? Does a view of him humble my soul; make me patient; excite my love; open my heart; crucify the world; conquer the fear of death?—Important inquiries! deeply interesting to my eternal safety and welfare! Happy the man who can say, "Thus do I look unto Jesus—and these are the blessed effects."

But a little knowledge of that loose and vague profession of religion which obtains among very many, obliges us to fear, that "looking to Jesus" forms little or no part of their Christianity; and *what is Christianity without Christ?* A false candor, or, rather, an infidel indifference, leads many persons to say, that neither any particular sentiments nor observances in religion are of any consequence as to future salvation; and that every man is equally right and acceptable to God, who is sincere, who leads a good life, and is useful in society.

In answer to this I must say, that the Scripture teaches a very different system; and the Scripture must be our rule, unless we are disposed to renounce Christianity. We would not depreciate morality and virtue (would to God we had more of them!) but, to make true religion consist in these, is to subvert altogether the foundation which God has laid. To be a Christian indeed, we must learn and feel our need of Christ as a Savior, for "the

whole need not a physician, but they that are sick;" we must be acquainted with the entire depravity of our fallen nature, and be humbled for it; we must see the necessity of a perfect righteousness, equal to the demands of God's righteous law, and be glad to say, "In the Lord (Jesus) have I righteousness and strength." Sensible of our total inability to save ourselves in whole, or in part, we must renounce every pretension to merit; looking to Jesus for wisdom, for righteousness, for holiness, for happiness, and for eternal life; in a word, in the religion of the Gospel "Christ is all in all!"

Alas! alas! how many live, as St. Paul expresses it, "*without Christ*"—he is not in all their thoughts. Can they be Christians, who never think of him? or they who blaspheme his name? or they who refuse to hear his voice, to read his word, to call upon his name? Can they be Christians, who cherish and practise those very sins, from which he came to deliver his people? Can they be Christians, who know nothing of that chief business of Christianity—looking to Jesus? It is most evident, it is most certain they are not, they cannot be, Christians. May divine grace convince them how dangerously they are mistaken, and enable them instantly to turn their eyes towards him, who, as yet, waits to be gracious, and rejects none who apply to him for succor. Should this be neglected, how will they bear to behold him, when he shall appear in the glorious dignity of the universal Judge, amidst the awful grandeur of a blazing world. Then "every eye shall see him." Then they who pierced him, and they who despised and rejected him, will vainly wish that rocks and mountains might crush them to atoms, and prevent the dreadful interview. O sinner! would you then behold the glorious Judge with serenity, now behold the gracious Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. O look to him and be saved, all ye ends of the earth. Look and live.

Fellow-Christians! you have need to pray, "Turn away our eyes from beholding vanity." Looking to Jesus will preserve your inward peace, and regulate your outward walk. And thus persevering to the end, death shall not separate you from his love; but "you shall see him for yourselves," and dwell in his presence for evermore. Amen.

PRAYER.—BLESSED God, thou hast set before us in thy word Jesus Christ, thy beloved Son, and our gracious Savior. Open our eyes and incline our hearts to behold the Lamb of

God. Turn away our eyes from beholding the perishable vanities of this evil world; and may they be fixed on this greatest and best object of confidence and affection!

Are there any of us who are living without Christ? who see no beauty nor comeliness in him?—who refuse to hear his voice, to read his word, and to come to him that they may have life? O convince them of their sin and of their danger! May they now, by faith, behold the Lamb, lest, having neglected the great salvation, they shall dread his appearance, the second time, to judgment!

Ever keep us, while in this world, looking to Jesus, that we may maintain peace in our consciences; that we may walk humbly with our God; that we may be patient in tribulation; that we may sincerely love God and our neighbor; that we may be crucified to the world; and, at last, have hope in our death, expecting, in a better state, to see him as he is, and to be for ever with the Lord! Amen.

SERMON LXV.

THE HAPPINESS OF BEING WITH CHRIST.

John xvii. 24. Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.

THE discourse of our blessed Savior to his disciples, and his prayer for them just before his passion, have ever been highly esteemed by the Church of Christ. Melancthon, the reformer, truly said, "There never was heard in heaven or earth a voice more excellent, more holy, more fruitful, more pathetic, than what we have in this prayer." Indeed it is a specimen of that gracious intercession, which the Redeemer ever lives to make for us above.

There was a superstitious custom among some Christians in ancient times, which Chrysostom severely reprov'd, of wearing this or some other part of the Gospel of St. John about their necks, as an amulet or preservative from evil; we, however, may make a more rational and effectual use of it, by storing it in our memories, especially if the Holy Spirit condescends to write it upon our hearts. Much notice is usually taken of the dying words of a great and a good man, especially of a dear friend: these are the words of a dying Savior, the friend of sinners; whose expressions of affection towards the apostles seemed to become stronger and stronger, as he drew nearer to the close of life. This portion of Scripture therefore deserves our most cordial regard. Let us attend to it with the greatest diligence, that we receive present edification and comfort; and, by treasuring it up in our

hearts, find it hereafter a powerful cordial (as thousands before us have found it) on a death-bed; then may we be filled with supreme delight, in the expectation of knowing, by experience, what it is to be with Jesus, and to behold his glory!

In the former part of this chapter, our Lord prayed for the *preservation*—the *sanctification*—and the union of his people; and here follows his prayer for their *glorification*. Observe this order. The disciples had obtained that knowledge of the Father and of the Son, which is connected with eternal life; ver. 3. 6. 8. He then petitions for their security against the dangers of this evil world; he proceeds to entreat their sanctification through his truth, their separation from wicked men; and here, to crown the whole, he expresses his desire, that when they leave the world, they may be “*with him*”—with him, “*where he is*”—and with him there, for the purpose of “*beholding*” and sharing his glory in the heavenly state.

Our discourse on these words will consist of a few practical OBSERVATIONS.

I. *It is useful, in all our prayers, to remember that we are addressing a FATHER.*

Our great Intercessor gives us this rule both by his precept and his example. “After this manner,” said he, “pray ye—*Our Father* who art in heaven;” and in this chapter he himself uses the endearing appellation no less than six times; the Holy Spirit is also promised to believers, for the purpose of enabling them thus to pray.—“Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, *Abba, Father.*” Through the blood of Jesus, a new and a living way is opened to the throne of grace; so that we are warranted in coming with boldness into the presence of God our heavenly Father, who knoweth our various necessities, and whose parental affection disposes him to supply them. This is to pray “in faith:” and, as one observes, “How different are the cries of a malefactor to a judge from the request of a child to a parent! This kind of prayer will prevail; while unbelief makes our prayers like a messenger deprived of his hands and feet.”

II. *The singular manner in which this petition of our Lord is expressed.* “*Father, I will.*” This way of praying is peculiar to Christ, when pleading as the advocate of his people; and we never find him using this phrase at any other time. Even his most earnest prayers for himself, in the hour of extremity, were in a dif-

ferent style.—“Nevertheless, *not my will*, but thine be done.” Here, when Christ is pleading for the eternal happiness of his people; pleading on the ground of that perfect satisfaction he was about to make by his death, he claims, as it were, the happiness which he had even now virtually purchased for them. In this manner are we to conceive of his constant intercession in heaven, as founded in the covenant engagements of his Father, and his own meritorious obedience and atonement: for “if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ *the righteous*—he who is the *propitiation* for our sins.” 1 John ii. 1. This manner of Christ’s praying (“*I will*”) should confirm our faith and increase our confidence in his intercession. The prayer that he makes cannot but be answered, for “the Father always heareth him.” The legacy that Christ bequeathed cannot fail of being paid. God is faithful to fulfil all his engagements made with his Son. And though every branch of salvation is a free gift to us, yet it is a matter of justice and equity to Jesus Christ our great surety.

III. *Believers belong to Christ; they are his by the gift of the Father.* Our Lord speaks of them several times in this chapter as given to him; “thine they were, and thou gavest them me,” ver. 6, and this is not to be confined to the apostles, for he says, ver. 20, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through thy word.” These are his peculiar people; “chosen in him before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy,” Eph. i. 4; they were given to him in the eternal purpose of God; in the covenant of redemption made with Christ; and they are given to him also, when, by the effectual calling of the Holy Spirit by the word, they are *drawn* to him, as it is expressed, John vi. 44. They are given to him “out of the world,” ver. 6. they are committed into his hands as the great shepherd of the sheep; are brought into his fold, fed in his pasture; and preserved by him that they may not perish, but have everlasting life.

IV. *Jesus Christ resides in heaven, and that in behalf of his people.*—“That they may be with me,” saith he “*where I am*,” and where that is, none can doubt. It is remarkable that he speaks of himself as there already—“*where I am*,” indeed, in his divine nature, he was there and everywhere, while speaking these words (John iii. 13.) but he speaks thus because he was just about to leave this wretched earth—“and now I am no more in the world;”

"and now I come to thee," ver. 11. 13. "I came forth from the Father—again I leave the world, and go to the Father." All this was shortly fulfilled; and the disciples saw him ascend to heaven, Acts i. 9. There "he appears in the presence of God *for us*; he appears in the heavenly temple, the true sanctuary, as our high-priest, as our great representative, to transact our affairs, to prepare places for us, and at the time appointed, "to receive us to himself; and to present us faultless before the throne of his glory, with exceeding joy."

V. *It is the will of Christ that all his people shall be with him in heaven.* He has a perfect knowledge of every individual—His heart is set upon their happiness—He knows they cannot be completely happy on earth,—and he designs their perfect bliss in heaven.

He perfectly knows each individual; as the good shepherd, "he calleth his own sheep by name"—"he knows his sheep"—John x. 3. 14. Even before their conversion his eye is upon them, as he said of many in Corinth before the Gospel was preached to them: "I have much people in this city." As he said of us poor Gentiles, as yet uncalled: "I have other sheep, which are not of the fold; (that is, not of the Jewish fold) them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice." When Saul of Tarsus was called by grace, he ordered his servant Ananias to visit him, directing him to the particular street, and to the very house by name, where he lodged. In like manner he pointed out to Peter, who was his missionary to Cornelius, his residence with Simon, a tanner, whose house was by the sea-side. Acts ix. 11. and x. 5. Thus, every individual of his people, however mean or obscure, is exactly known to the Savior, whose "foundation standeth sure, having this inscription—The Lord knoweth them that are his."

The heart of Jesus is set upon the happiness of his people: he has a real, personal, intense love towards each of them; and this is the source of all he has said, and done, and suffered for them. Love brought him down from the throne of glory to the stable; to the workshop; to poverty, to contempt; to the cross, to the grave. His people are "his bride," yea, "his body;" and he loves them more than the most affectionate husband his beloved bride; yea, more than any one loveth his own flesh. How sweetly did he manifest his affection to his disciples when on earth; mean, ignorant, and sometimes mistaken men, as they were; nor is his love abated since his glorious exaltation; he has taken a human

heart with him to heaven, he is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and designs to wipe away all tears from our eyes.

Jesus Christ well knows that believers cannot be completely happy in the present evil world. He knows this world well; for he lived in it himself: he bore the contradiction of sinners in it; and he knows that his followers must expect a similar treatment. The experience of men in all ages proves that all here is "vanity of vanities, and vexation of Spirit." Complete felicity here is the dream of fools or madmen. The softest nest we can find is not without a thorn. This is not our rest. We have no continuing city here. We are exposed to a thousand temptations. We are liable to a thousand misfortunes; and whatever our outward lot may be, the inward cross, the law of sin in our members, will always embitter our condition. We are but in our embryo state, as the babe in the womb, the bird in the egg, the butterfly in the chrysalis; it is by death we burst into life; we die to live. O the folly then of clinging to life, or shrinking from death!

VI. *Complete and unceasing happiness will be obtained when we are "with Christ."*

The heavenly state is frequently described by *negatives*—"for it doth not yet appear what we shall be;" not fully, however. But we are so well acquainted with the troubles of life, that deliverance from them is highly desirable; hence it is written, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain:—and there shall be no more curse." This is much: "Blessed," on these accounts, "are the dead which die in the Lord—for they rest from their labors:" but we are not to conceive of heaven only, or chiefly, as a state of exemption from misery; we have here a positive idea of the celestial world, given us by him who came from it; by him who prepares it; by him in whose presence and glory it consists—"that they may be with me, *where I am.*"

But how shall we form a worthy idea of this happiness? Let us reflect on the happiness which the disciples of our Lord enjoyed in his company on earth, of which we may judge by their sorrow on his leaving them. Grace was poured from his lips. He spake as man never spake. Their hearts burned within them when he expounded the Scriptures. How happy was Mary sitting at his feet! How blessed the penitents who heard him say—"Your sins are forgiven you!" How transported the

sick, and the cripples, who possessed health suddenly restored at his word ! How grateful the relatives of Lazarus and others brought back from the dead ! How happy the apostles, in daily communion with him on their journeys and at their meals, and in receiving unnumbered tokens of his condescending and captivating friendship !

Even now, though Jesus is in heaven, we, who believe, enjoy his spiritual presence. "The Lord Jesus be with thy spirit," is an apostolic prayer, constantly fulfilled to his people. It was what he promised—"Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Have we not known the pleasure of communion with him ? When we have read his word, when we have heard his gospel, when we have attended his table, when we have poured out our hearts at his feet, when we have lifted up our souls in his praise, have we not been constrained to say, "It is good for us to be here !" and why good ? but because Jesus himself was with us.

This is sweet ; but to be with Christ must be far better. So St. Paul judged. "For me," said he, "to live is Christ, and to die is gain." "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." The apostle was a happy man, for Christ lived in him ; he was a contented man, having learned in every state to be satisfied with it ; and he was a singularly useful man, for his labors were abundantly blessed. And yet, such were his views of the superior bliss of being "present with the Lord," that he longed to be "absent from the body." What Paul wished for himself, Christ wills for all his people, "that they may be with me," saith he. *Where I am*, that is, in heaven ; a state of rest, of peace, of holiness, of pleasure, of glory. We have said, that we may form an idea of the happiness of being with Christ in heaven, by knowing something of Christ's being with us upon earth ; and yet this affords but a very imperfect knowledge of the matter. The following reasons, however, warrant us to conclude that the presence of Christ will be infinitely satisfying and delightful. There we shall perfectly understand the dignity of his character. On earth his disciples had a very inadequate idea of this, and sometimes, perhaps, their doubts and fears concerning him. We too have very imperfect conceptions of his glory : but there we shall see "the king in his beauty," and commune with him upon his throne.—Our happiness will be uninterrupted. When below, even his apostles were fre-

quently deprived of his company. Many days was he absent from most of them, and spent whole nights in prayer alone. And, alas ! how seldom do we enjoy his gracious presence, and how short the seasons of our felicity ! but there our enjoyments of his presence will be perpetual and uninterrupted. No persecuting Pharisee, no hypocritical Judas, no tyrant lust, no ensnaring world, no tempting devil, shall deprive us of his presence for a moment. Another important branch of our happiness will consist in being *like* our Lord. Nothing so much cements friendship as a similarity of disposition. To enjoy communion with our divine Redeemer, we must be like him, and the more we are so, the more shall we enjoy of his divine presence. In heaven we shall see him as he is, and be conformed perfectly to his image.—The company of our earthly friends, whom we esteem as great, and wise, and good, is highly gratifying ; but the pleasure of being with Christ must be wonderfully enhanced by the consideration of our infinite obligations to him, for his eternal, immense, and unparalleled love and goodness to us. If an unseen Christ is precious to us, we have reason to think that a sight of his lovely and glorious person will fill us with joy unspeakable and full of glory.—Lastly, This felicity will be eternal. When our Lord was upon earth, he often dropped hints of leaving them, "yet a little while, and I go to my Father,"—which sometimes made them exceedingly sorrowful. But in heaven will be no more parting, nor even the possibility of it.—"We shall be for ever with the Lord."

VII. *We observe the great end which Christ has in view, in having his people with him—"that they may behold his glory."*

To "behold" is in Scripture language to enjoy, to participate : "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God:" that is, he cannot participate or enjoy it. In this we may remark, that mutual happiness is the great object of our Redeemer. It was promised as the reward of his sufferings, that he should "see his seed, that he should prolong his days"—that he should "see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." Is. liii. 10, 11. So that Christ himself has a great interest in the happiness of his people, and indeed cannot himself be happy without they are with him, and enjoy the like happiness : "I will," I desire, I delight, as the word is sometimes used, "that they may behold my glory." See Matt. xxviii. 43. Mark xii. 38. Luke xx. 46.

Jesus Christ was infinitely glorious from

all eternity. We read, ver. 5, of "the glory which he had with the Father, before the world was;" but for our sakes he made himself of no reputation (*emptied himself* of all his glory) and assumed human nature in a lowly form, submitting to a life of deep humiliation, and to an ignominious death. Yet, even before his incarnation, he was pleased, occasionally, to afford some resplendent glimpses of his glory. Abraham was indulged with a view of it, for "he saw Christ's day, and was filled with ecstatic joy." Moses, the man of God, earnestly prayed, saying, "I beseech thee, show me thy glory," and he was gratified; and we are expressly told, that "Isaiah saw his glory," when he had a vision in the temple of "*the Lord of hosts*."

When our Savior dwelt among men, and appeared in the form of a servant; when carnal eyes, dazzled with worldly splendor, saw no form nor comeliness in him; when, as a man of sorrows, he was despised and rejected of men; even then, the lustre of his glory broke through all the clouds of his humiliation; and believers, whose eyes the Lord had opened, "beheld his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." The beauty of holiness displayed in his whole character, the divine light that shone in his charming instructions, the heavenly love that glowed in all his benevolent miracles, "manifested forth his glory." He appeared divinely glorious at Jordan; on the mount of transfiguration; and when rising from the tomb. Stephen, and Paul, and John, were favored with a glance of glory on extraordinary occasions.

The state of our Lord, after he had finished his meritorious sufferings on earth, and ascended to heaven, became infinitely glorious. It was according to the plan of redemption that, having "suffered these things, he should enter into his glory;" and the Spirit of Christ in the ancient prophets "testified beforehand these sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

But in what more particularly does this glory consist? 1. His human nature is most glorious: that sacred countenance, which once was marred more than any man's, that sacred body which was bruised, broken, and crucified for us, is now brighter and more glorious than the sun; and is become the pattern of what his redeemed shall one day be; for "he shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like

his glorious body." This now possesses a lustre too brilliant for mortal eyes; for when Jesus presented himself in his glorified state to Saul at his conversion, he was utterly overpowered with the vision; and when the beloved John beheld his glorious appearance in Patmos, "he fell at his feet as one dead."

2. Jesus Christ will appear infinitely glorious in the exercise of his office as mediator, for he continues to exercise this office in heaven, and will continue to do so until all the ransomed are come to glory.

As a *prophet*, he still teaches the whole church, by his holy word and holy Spirit. We are by no means to confine his teaching to the few years he travelled in Judea: millions of humble scholars have been sitting at his feet in all ages; and millions more will succeed, till the whole body of the elect has become wise to salvation.

Inexpressibly great is the glory of Jesus as the great *High-Priest* of our Christian profession. We are to conceive of heaven as the true temple, of which that at Jerusalem was merely the type, where our glorious Lord is constantly officiating. By the one sacrifice he offered on the cross, he hath made a full and complete atonement for sin; and now he appears in the most holy place, in the presence of God, to present the merit of his blood, and to secure its application to every one of his people. Here he superintends the cares of the whole church. He raises up, sends forth, and gives success to the ministers of the Gospel; by their instrumentality, he still seeks and saves his lost sheep; he exercises compassion and care toward "the ignorant, and them that are out of the way." He feeds his flock like a shepherd, and secures them in his almighty hands, that they may never perish, but have everlasting life.

In heaven, Jesus reigns, the *king* of Zion; he possesses universal authority; angels, men, and devils being subject to his control. The affairs of the whole universe are under his direction, and overruled to the purposes of his glory. He reigns, and "must reign, till he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and all power—till he hath put all enemies under his feet."

This, then, is that glory of Christ, which he prays that his people may see. This is a mere glimpse of it, imperfectly caught by a weak eye, through that glass in which the keenest believer sees but obscurely. Yet this very poor and obscure glance of

the glory of Christ may be sufficient to convince us, that to behold it, face to face, must be inconceivably happy; and to make us adopt the Psalmist's pious words, "As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness"—the likeness of God in Christ—the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person: this indeed will satisfy the unbounded desire of the human heart, and nothing less than this can suffice.

IMPROVEMENT.

FROM what has been said, we may learn how to form the best idea of heaven of which we are capable in our present state. To be with Christ, and to behold his glory, is a just idea of heaven; it must be so, for it is the idea which Christ himself gives us of it. Let us not then be content to think of heaven as a state of mere exemption from trouble, much less as a place of sensual delight, as Mahomet taught; but as a condition of perfect holiness and supreme felicity in the presence of the Lamb, and in the vision of his glory.

And this may also serve to enable us to form some judgment of our state towards God, and whether we are likely to go to heaven when we die. The serious Christian has many an anxious thought on this head; while the presumptuous sinner and the cold formalist seldom entertain a doubt. This subject may be serviceable to both. Does the former love to hear, and read, and think of Christ? Does he love the place where his honor dwelleth? Is Jesus high in his esteem? Does he delight in beholding the glory of Jesus in the glass of his word? Does he long to behold more and more of it? and does the glance he obtains transform him in some degree into the same glory? Then he has reason to hope, that he is interested in this prayer; and if so, shall certainly be with him where he is, and behold his glory without a veil.

But, on the other hand, here is nothing to countenance the vain hope of a carnal man. He who sees no glory in Jesus here, is not in the way to behold it hereafter; and it is certain, that the person who neglects his Gospel, disregards his word, willfully is ignorant of his truth, dislikes his people, shuns his ordinances, has never once discerned the glory of the Redeemer. He who loves the sin that Christ abhors, and hates the holiness that Jesus loves, cannot, in this state, entertain any scriptural hope of heaven. No, he must be

washed; he must be justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus; he must be sanctified by the Spirit of our God; or he can never enter into the kingdom of glory. The persons described in this chapter, as those for whom Christ prays, and wishes to be with him, are such as know him—to whom God's name and nature are manifested—who are not of the world—who are sanctified by the truth. Is this then *our* character? If not, our hope of glory is mere presumption.

We may infer from this prayer of Christ *the safety of all those who live in him*. It appears that the heart of Christ is fully set upon the happiness of his people. "*I will*," saith he, "that they may be with me." Now, does Jesus, who hath almighty power, *will* this? Who then shall prevent it. Who shall resist his will? Is there any power in heaven, or earth, or hell, superior to his? If this be his will, it shall be accomplished; for what can prevent it? His love is unchangeable; his purpose unalterable; his engagements must be fulfilled. Let believers then be ashamed of their doubts and fears. Let them rely upon his promises; let them confide in his faithfulness; let them gladly join St. Paul, and say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able (and we may add, *determined* too) to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

This representation of the love of Christ is well calculated to excite our love to him. After having laid down his life for us, after ascending into heaven for us, after having called us by his grace, he pleads for our company, and will not be satisfied without having us with him. O what marvellous love is this! and surely demands a return of affection to him. Can we do any thing for him on earth? Let us do it gladly. Can we suffer any thing for him below? Let us bear it joyfully. And let us not cleave to the earth too much. If he wills that we should be with him, is it not fit that we should be willing, yea, desirous of leaving all for that purpose?

Finally. This subject throws a wonderful lustre over the glooms of death and the grave. Dark as they are in themselves, and dreadful to nature, the sun of righteousness, rising, dispels the threatening clouds, and gilds the darksome scene. With that view of the matter, to which the Lord of life directs us in our text, what is death? Not a horrid monster, the cruel executioner of the broken law, threatening to thrust our reluctant spirits

into the prison of hell; but the mild and gentle messenger of our Savior, who says, "The prayer of Jesus is fulfilled: my master has long wished for your company, and the time appointed is arrived: shut your eyes upon the fading glories of the world, and open them upon the glory of the incarnate God, your beloved Savior above, who waits to receive you to himself, that where he is, you may be also."

And this should moderate our desire of life, and prevent our fear of death; so should it make us sober and resigned, when we pray for the recovery of the pious sick. It is lawful, with submission to the divine pleasure, to entreat the continuance of desirable and useful lives: but we should not be too anxious, lest our petitions should clash with those of our Savior, who prays they may be with *him*, while we are so earnest that they may be with *us*. This too, should keep us from sorrowing, as those without hope, on account of departed believers. They are with the Lord, where he wished them to be, and where they are infinitely happy. They are far happier than ourselves. We live by faith; they by sight. We see through a glass, darkly; they see face to face. We catch a glance of the glory of Christ; they see it steadily, openly, unceasingly. We are transformed in some measure (and O in what a small measure!) they are perfectly like him, for they "see him as he is." May divine mercy, in the fittest time, fulfil this prayer of Christ for each of us, that "we may be with him, where he is, and behold his glory." Amen and Amen!

PRAYER.—GLORIOUS Intercessor! blessed Advocate of sinners, who hast entered into the presence of God for us, we adore thee for that specimen of thy intercession which we have now been hearing. We are thine, gracious Lord, given to thee by the Father; and we learn that it is thy holy will that we shall be with thee, where thou art,—for indeed this is not our rest; and thou knowest that we cannot be completely happy in this sinful and miserable world; but we are well assured that to be with thee, to see thee as thou art, to be conformed to thy image, and to behold the splendor of thy mediatorial glory, will render us perfectly blessed. O prepare us, by thy Spirit, for the heavenly world! Enable each of us to say, For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Here may we love and serve thee with all our hearts; and when we close our eyes upon the fading glories of Earth, may we open them in the celestial Paradise, to behold, with unveiled face, the glories of the Lamb, who sits in the midst of the throne; to whom, with the Father of mercies, and the Spirit of all grace, be glory, honor, and thanksgiving for evermore. Amen.

SERMON LXVI.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

John xvii. 3. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.

THE belief of a God is the foundation of all religion. If we "come to God," for the purpose of worship, we "must believe that *he is*;" and we cannot come to him aright, without knowing *what he is*, or what are the perfections which he possesses. It is, therefore, of the greatest importance to obtain a right knowledge of his character; and this is what is affirmed by "the faithful and true witness" in the words of our text. Our Lord asserts that "it is eternal life" to know the only true God—that is, it is the means, the *way*, the sure and only way to eternal life:—that there is a *connexion* between the right knowledge of the only true God, and the attainment of eternal felicity, of which, indeed, this knowledge furnishes the true Christian with the beginning and the earnest.

Let us here consider—

1. The glorious *objects* of saving knowledge; and

2. The *connexion* of this knowledge with eternal life.

I. The great and glorious objects of saving knowledge, mentioned in the text, are—"the only true God," and "his Son Jesus Christ."

The mind of man was formed for knowledge. He is endowed with faculties superior to those of all other creatures upon earth, which render him capable of obtaining the knowledge of God. You cannot, by any means, communicate to the most sagacious animal, the least idea of the great Creator; but man was originally made in "the image" of his Maker; of which image, "knowledge" formed an essential part; and when fallen man is renewed by grace, in the image of God, he is renewed "in knowledge and true holiness."

It is an unhappy consequence of man's apostasy from God, that he is not disposed to seek him. On the contrary, wicked men say to God, in their hearts and by their practice, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." In all other matters, it is natural to man to look at every object around him, and to ask—What is it? What is it for? Whence does it come? Man naturally

inquires into the reasons and causes of things: and, surely, the *first* cause, the great maker of all, should be the first and chief object of inquiry. And, were we rightly disposed to seek him, we should soon find him. "He is not far from every one of us." We are surrounded with God. The heavens, the earth, the sea, display his glory. The whole world is a kind of looking-glass, in which his perfections are reflected; for "the invisible things of him, even his power and godhead, are clearly seen by the things that appear." But alas! "the world by wisdom knew not God:" and the reason was, "they did not like to retain God in their knowledge; therefore God gave them over to a reprobate mind,"—"they changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator:" they even "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the image of corruptible men, yea, of four-footed beasts and creeping things." The better sort of the gods which the heathens adored, were, in general, patterns of abominable vices; and it is no wonder that their worshippers imitated them, and mingled their devotions with the utmost execrable deeds. Hence it was that some of their wise men, sensible of the mischief of such a system, wished that the poets, who dressed up in fine language the stories and the vices of the gods, should be banished from the country, as the enemies of society.

In opposition to this wretched gang of deities, the knowledge of "the only true God" is here extolled. **JEHOVAH** is the only *true* God; all others are *false*: they are "vanity and lies." A principal design of divine Revelation was to maintain this great truth,—"**THERE IS ONE GOD, and there is none other but HE.**" Mark xii. 32. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." Deut. vi. 4: and the Jewish nation had the honor, for many ages, of being the chief supporters of this great doctrine, amidst a world of blind idolaters. The sacred Scriptures which they possessed, and which were the treasury of this sacred truth, have been handed down to us; and we enjoy, in addition to them, the testimonies of the inspired apostles in the New Testament; and above all, the testimony of the Son of God himself in our text, and in many other places. In the scriptures of truth we learn all that is necessary to be known of God. All his moral as well as his natural perfections are therein displayed. There we learn that he is **ETERNAL, ALMIGHTY, OMNIPRESENT, HOLY, JUST, WISE, FAITHFUL, and GOOD.**

Blessed be God for these bright discoveries of his infinite perfections! It is life eternal to know thee, the only true God!

But, in our text, we find the knowledge of *Jesus Christ* is made of equal importance with the knowledge of *God*; which seems to imply that Jesus Christ is equal with God; and so indeed he is. At the first view of these words, some may think that the inferiority of our Savior is intimated, for it is said—"This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the *only true God, and Jesus Christ,*" &c. But the title of "the *only true God*" is not intended to exclude the Son of God, but to exclude *idols*. Jehovah is the only true God, and idols are nothing; but as Jesus Christ is, in many places of the Scripture, declared to be the true God, the text cannot be understood as a denial of his Deity; but it is intended to show that it is necessary to salvation, not only to know God as a *Creator*, but also, as a *Savior*: it is as necessary to know Jesus the Mediator, by whom we come to the Father, as it is to know the Father himself; and as we said before, thus rendering the knowledge of Christ as necessary to eternal life as the knowledge of God the Father, the text, instead of rejecting the divinity of Jesus, affords a powerful argument for it;—and here let it be observed, that the three names of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are not intended to explain to us the manner in which the three divine persons subsist, for that is not revealed, nor could we comprehend it if it were; but they are the *office names* of the three divine persons in the Godhead; and express the characters they sustain in the covenant of grace; and these "Three are One"—three in person and in office, but one in nature and in essence.

The true divinity of our Savior is strongly asserted in the following scripture:—John v. 22, 23. "The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son: that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." And in the 20th chapter of St. John, verse the 28th, we find the apostle, St. Thomas, saying to Christ, "My Lord, and my God." St. Paul also charges the elders of Ephesus to "feed the Church of God, which *he*" (that is, Christ) "purchased with his own blood." Acts xx. 28. Many more passages might be cited in proof of this doctrine, but we add only the following: Rom. ix. 5, "Of whom," that is, of the Fathers, "as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." It is necessary to know the Son of God as de-

scribed by those two names—JESUS and CHRIST, as descriptive of his character and office. The name JESUS was given him to denote the great work of salvation which he came to perform: "Thou shalt call his name JESUS," said the angel to his mother, "for he shall *save* his people from their sins:" (Matt. i. 21.) for he came from Heaven on purpose to deliver his people from their iniquities by the sacrifice of himself, and by the power of his Spirit attending his word.

But, it may be asked by the anxious sinner, Is he appointed, and perfectly able to do this? Yes, he is, for he is CHRIST also, which name signifies *Anointed* in the Greek language, as *Messiah* does in the Hebrew. The name denotes his being fully qualified for the office, being anointed by the Holy Spirit, "full of grace and truth;" and as, in ancient times, kings, priests, and prophets were solemnly set apart to their several offices by being anointed, so Jesus Christ is divinely consecrated and authorized to perform the grand work of saving sinners; and this is farther expressed by his being *Sent*—"Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent." Jesus Christ, though equal with the Father as touching his divine nature, condescends, in his human nature, and in his office of Mediator, to become "the servant of the Father;" and, in regard to that character, he was sent; he did not come without authority; he came with all the authority of Heaven, to accomplish the great design, determined upon in the councils of God, before the foundation of the world. To know Christ, therefore, is as necessary to salvation as to know the Father; he is as much the object of saving knowledge and of saving faith as the Father; and he is distinguished from him, not on account of any inferiority of nature, but on account of his office-character; and it may be remarked, that the same apostle, who records the words of the text, expressly says of Christ (1 John v. 21.) "This is *the true God*, and eternal life." Our Lord himself also declares, that he himself is, equally with the Father, the object of faith (John xiv. 1.) "Ye believe in God, believe also in me"—that is, Ye have faith in God the Father, according to the discoveries of the Old Testament; have the same faith in me, his Son, the Savior, according to the discoveries of the New Testament.

Let us now proceed, as we proposed, in the second place, to point out,

II. *The connexion between the knowledge of the Father and of his Son, and the attainment of eternal life.*

And here let us pause a moment, and consider the import of the words—"eternal life." This is the glorious blessing which the Son of God came from Heaven to procure for sinners, who deserved eternal death, and were justly doomed to it by the broken law of a righteous God. "The wages of sin is *death*"—not merely the death of the body, but that which may be called the Death of the Soul—complete and everlasting separation from God, who is the only fountain of life and happiness; and this is called (Rev. xxi. 8.) "the *Second Death*;" this is that dreadful state which our Lord himself calls "everlasting punishment"—"everlasting fire"—"where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched." But, although the wages of sin be death, "the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. vi. 23.

Opposed then to eternal death, is that eternal life of which our text speaks; the foundation of which is laid in *justification of life*, as St. Paul terms it (Rom. v. 18.) which includes both an exemption from the sentence of death, and a title, through the perfect righteousness of Christ, to the complete enjoyment of happiness in Heaven; for which blessed state every true Christian is prepared by the gift of the Holy Spirit, who, as an active principle of Spiritual life, is compared, by our Lord, to "a well of water springing up to everlasting life." What the glories and happiness of that state will be, it doth not yet fully appear; but we know that they will consist, partly, in that knowledge of God in Christ which is here commenced; for "we shall see him as he is," and "know even as we are known."

Now, such is the importance of divine knowledge, that our text declares "it is eternal life"—it is so connected with it, that eternal life is not to be expected without it, but may be confidently hoped for as the result of it.

This will appear, if we consider that the knowledge of *ourselves*, in relation to God; conviction of sin; apprehension of danger; prayer to God for pardon; trusting in him, through Christ, for salvation; love to him; delight in him; hope in his mercy; and obedience to his will (all which are necessary in a Christian,) depend upon, and result from a knowledge of his true character; and, consequently, that gross ignorance of him, or great mistakes respecting him, must be extremely dangerous to the soul.

It is through the knowledge of God, as infinitely pure and holy, that we become

humble and penitent. We see his infinite purity in the glass of his holy law; we discern our own deformity; "abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes," as pious Job did. The heathens thought God to be "altogether like unto themselves," no wonder then that they were proud and wicked. Where ignorance of God prevails, there sin also prevails. The prophet Hosea, complaining of the people in his days, says, "there is no knowledge of God in the land," and he ascribes to this, the prevalence of "swearing, lying, stealing, adultery, and murder." Hosea, iv. 12. Where ignorance reigns, there Satan also reigns, for "he is the ruler of the darkness of this world," and wicked men are "under the power of darkness." Hence when Jesus Christ commissioned Paul to go and preach the Gospel to the heathen, it was for the purpose of "turning them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God." It was ignorance of God that caused the Pharisee in the temple to boast; it was a true knowledge of him that humbled the publican, and constrained him to cry,—“God be merciful to me a sinner!”

It is through the knowledge of God in Christ, that we are led to *believe in him*. "They that know thy name," says the psalmist, "will trust in thee." We dare not, in any momentous affair, especially in a matter of life and death, confide in a stranger, a person of whose ability and integrity we have no knowledge. If our property, if our health, if our life be in danger, we are anxious to know whom we trust to defend us: how much more necessary is it to know Him to whom we commit our immortal souls; to whose advocacy we leave our cause; on whose fidelity we repose, and who is the only foundation of our hopes of eternity. Our faith will certainly bear some proportion to our knowledge; if our knowledge be very imperfect, our faith will be weak. Abraham's acquaintance with the character of God, preserved him from distrust, even in the most trying circumstances; therefore, "he staggered not at the promise of God, through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; being fully persuaded that what he had promised (however contrary to nature) he was able to perform." Rom. iv. 20, 21. In like manner, the blessed apostle, St. Paul, in the prospect of martyrdom, says, "*I know* whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." 2 Tim. i. 12.

Love is another distinguishing disposi-

tion of the real Christian, without which all pretensions to religion are vain; but how is it possible to love any person, however amiable he may be, if we are perfectly ignorant of his character? The knowledge of God and the love of God are inseparable; for St. John saith—"He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love." It is the moral excellency of any person that renders him amiable in our esteem. Wisdom, justice, goodness, recommend a fellow-creature to our regard; but that regard must arise from some acquaintance with the person possessing these virtues, and it is heightened by our deriving personal advantage from his possession of them. In like manner, the glorious God presents himself to our view, in his works, and especially in his Gospel, as infinite in power, wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth; and, as exercising all these perfections, through the redemption that is in Christ, for us men and for our salvation; to deliver us from guilt and danger, to reinstate us in his favor and friendship, to render us happy in communion with him here, and most blessed for ever, at his own right hand, where there is fullness of joy, and pleasures for evermore? Surely, such a being must appear to us infinitely worthy of our highest veneration, our most cordial affection, our most devoted obedience. But all this depends upon the knowledge of God and of his Son Jesus Christ.

It is equally plain that the true and acceptable *worship of God* must depend on the right knowledge of him. "Ye worship ye know not what," said our Lord to the Samaritans; "we know what we worship," said he of the Jews, who derived their knowledge from the sacred Scriptures. More grossly ignorant than the Samaritans were the Greeks; for in their metropolis, in Athens, so famed for its wisdom, the apostle of the Gentiles beheld an altar with this inscription,—“To the unknown God.”—Unknown, alas! in Athens! unknown by the learned and sagacious Greeks! so true it is, that "the world by wisdom knew not God." Neither Egypt, nor Greece, nor Rome, with all their improvements in science, arts, and arms, knew or worshipped the true God. But Jehovah has revealed himself to us; he has also revealed to us the way and manner in which he may and will be worshipped; and "every one who hath heard and learned of the Father, comes to him by Jesus Christ:"—for no man cometh to the Father but by him; and coming to him in this way, we must also worship him "in spirit and in truth,"

not with bodily service merely, nor merely with the best worded petitions, but with the heart: with sincerity, reverence, fervent desires, and humble hopes; all which imply the knowledge of God.

The great importance of the right knowledge of God having been sufficiently proved, there are some practical lessons of instruction which we may learn from the subject.

From hence we perceive in what a deplorable condition a great part of the world continues to this day. There are millions of our fellow-creatures who know not God; who, following the superstitions of their fathers, worship, if they worship at all, idols of their own making; while, for the greater part, they are addicted to the grossest vices and most cruel practices; walking, as St. Paul expresses it, "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." How devoutly is it to be wished that proper and effectual means may be taken to dispel this dreadful darkness, and to communicate to them the saving knowledge of God!

More pitiable, because far more criminal, are those persons among ourselves in this land of vision, who know not God; for it may truly be said of many in this country, as St. Paul said of others in his day, "Some have not the knowledge of God; I speak this to your shame!" How many are wilfully and contentedly ignorant. "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." Unhappy creatures! their ignorance is their sin; yet their ignorance hides from them both their sin and their danger. "My people," said the Lord concerning Israel, "are destroyed for lack of knowledge;" and the same may be said of many who are called his people now: but let such persons know this, that the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven in flaming fire;" and when he comes, he will "take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Th. i. 7, 8. Let none then who live in this happy country, think that they shall be excused on account of their ignorance; for all have opportunity to read or hear the Gospel; and to neglect the proper means of obtaining divine knowledge is to incur the displeasure of God; for "this is the condemnation," said the Savior himself, "that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." John iii. 19. O that such persons may resolve, by the grace of God, from this moment, earnestly to apply their hearts to

wisdom; and, while they use the means, pray fervently to "the Father of lights" to make them wise to salvation!

Others among us have the greatest cause for thankfulness. Has he, who, in the first creation, "commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined into your hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ?" O reflect on the greatness of the blessing! Christ congratulated his disciples on this account, saying, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see;" and he offered up praises, to his heavenly Father, that he had revealed to babes the great truths of the Gospel, which the wise and the prudent had rejected. Let it be your constant care to let "your light shine before men, that they seeing your good works, may glorify your Father, who is in heaven." If you have indeed been "taught of God," prove it, by "putting off the old man of sin," and by being "renewed in the spirit of your mind." For the true knowledge of God is always practical. We deceive ourselves if we pretend to know him, and yet persist in sin. The apostle John tells us, that "he who saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." 1 John ii. 4. On the contrary, he who truly knows God, will love, and serve, and obey him. Thus the obedience of the young king Josiah is mentioned, by the Lord himself, as the evidence of the right knowledge of him:—"he judged the cause of the poor and needy, then it was well with him; was not this to know me? saith the Lord." Jer. xxii. 16. A right knowledge of Christ produces an imitation of him: "we behold his glory, and are changed into the same image; we behold the glory of his holiness, meekness, humility, and self-denial; and we study to be holy, and meek, and humble, and self-denied, like him. This is the true knowledge of God: and if you possess this, in any measure, you have cause to be thankful. Then, indeed, may you glory in this—not that you are rich or mighty in the world, but that you know the Lord; that you are going on to know him better; and that the happy day may be expected, when, in the heavenly world, you shall "know even as you are known;" not see any longer "through a glass darkly, but face to face;" and learn, by blessed experience, the full meaning of the text—"This is eternal life, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent."—To whom, with the Holy Spirit, the one God of our salvation, be ascribed everlasting praise! Amen.

PRAYER.—ALMIGHTY God, the Father of Lights, and Fountain of all Wisdom, give us, we pray thee, thy Holy Spirit—the great and promised Teacher, to lead us into all truth; and especially that we may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. We thank thee that the true light shineth around us. O let it shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. May this knowledge deeply humble us; may it lead us to trust only, and to trust confidently on the Savior; may we supremely love thee, worship thee in spirit and in truth, and practically prove that the truth is in us, by departing from all evil, and keeping thy holy commandments; and may we, finally, be admitted to that world of light, where we shall no longer see through a glass darkly, but face to face; and so learn, by happy experience, the full meaning of the text,—This is eternal life, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent; to whom, with the Holy Spirit, be glory and honor, for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON LXVII.

THE POWER OF GOD.

Genesis xvii. 1. I am the Almighty God.

IN attempting to display the divine perfections, it is natural to begin with that which first strikes the mind of man when he thinks of a God. Whoever believes that there is a God, must believe that he is a great and powerful being. When St. Paul says, that “the invisible things of God” are perceived by the works of his hands, he mentions particularly, “his eternal power.” Rom. i. 20. We cannot conceive of a God without power; nor can we conceive rightly of Jehovah but as a God of *infinite* power; the *Almighty* God, as he is called in our text. By this name he revealed himself to Abraham, when he appeared to him to confirm the promise of a very numerous posterity; a thing that seemed unlikely, if human appearances only had been consulted: but, to encourage his faith in the promise, he says, “I am the Almighty God.” This was enough. Abraham was satisfied: he believed: he waited; and the promise was fulfilled. It will also greatly assist our faith, and promote our devotion, if we receive and retain a solemn conviction that

God is a being possessed of infinite power.

Let us trace the evidences of this truth,

1. In the original production of all creatures;
2. In the preservation and government of all creatures; and,
3. In the redemption of sinful man.

I. “Through faith we understand that

the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear.” Heb. xi. 3. They were not merely *formed*, they were *created*—they were made out of nothing, the matter of which they were formed was created; for, “in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. i. 1;) and these two words, “the heaven and the earth,” include all the countless myriads of creatures and things which fill the universe, and far exceed the ken of mortals. God alone can create. Men can build houses and ships, but they must have materials to build them with; but when God made the world, he found no materials to work with; he created the materials themselves, he made the matter of the heaven and the earth; he then *framed*, or curiously and perfectly wrought, that created matter into millions of beautiful forms; and, in the space of six days “the heavens and the earth were *finished*.” Gen. ii. 1. All God’s works are *finished* works; they will bear the closest inspection, and when most examined, will be most admired; they are the work of the Almighty God.

It is thus that he is distinguished from all false and pretended gods. “The idols of the heathen are vanity and lies, but the Lord made the heavens.”—“For thus, said the Lord, that created the heavens, God himself that formed the earth, and made it; he hath established it; he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited; I am the Lord, and there is none else.” Isa. xlv. 18. “The gods that have not made the heaven and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth; they are vanity and the work of errors.” Jer. x. 11.

The limits of a short sermon will not admit of a large description of the creation. We can refer but to few particulars. Observe the power of God in the *greatness* of some bodies, and in the *smallness* of others. The earth, which we inhabit, is eight thousand miles in diameter (or across;) but what is this to the body of the sun, which is said to be a million of times larger than the earth, and ninety millions of miles distant from it? Some of the fixed stars are, perhaps, suns of other systems, and at such an immense distance, that it is supposed their light would be many thousands of years in reaching us, were it to travel with the velocity (or quickness) of a cannon-ball.

The *smallness* of many creatures is as surprising as the greatness of others. There are living creatures so very small, that many thousands of them may be con-

tained in the bulk of a single drop of water. These all proclaim, with a loud voice, the almighty power of God; they constrain us to cry out, in the words of the prophet, "Ah, Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power, and there is nothing too hard for thee." Jer. x. 17. They oblige us also to exclaim, in the language of the psalmist, "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him!" Ps. viii. But this condescension of the Almighty God will perhaps appear more wonderful, when we consider, in the second place,

II. The power of God, as it is displayed in the preservation and government of his creatures.

The whole system is preserved in its beautiful order by the same almighty hand which gave it being. "He upholds all things by the word of his power." The planets, those vast bodies, revolve in their appointed circuits with the most minute exactness, as is evident from the nicety with which eclipses and other wonders of the heavens are calculated. The earth, for instance, performs its annual revolution in three hundred and sixty-five days, five hours, and forty-nine minutes, never varying its course a single inch, nor its period a single moment. The moon also faithfully attends the earth, and sweetly lessens the gloom of our tedious nights. The various seasons succeed each other in their appointed order; and, according to the divine promise, "summer and winter, seed-time and harvest" continue to this day. The great and wide sea, whose billows roar and threaten to overwhelm the earth, is kept by the power of its Maker, within its proper limits: and "shall we not fear him who has placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it?—and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail?—though they roar, yet can they not pass over it!" Jer. v. 22.

Mark the display of the same almighty power in making constant provision for the vast family of the universe. All the innumerable tribes of beings which inhabit the air, the earth, and the water, "these all wait upon God, that he may give them their food in due season; that which he giveth them, they gather; he openeth his hand, they are filled with good." Ps. civ. 27.

The continuance, from age to age, of the various orders of animals, beasts, birds, fishes, insects; and all the multitudes of trees, plants, and flowers, must be ascribed to the same almighty power. How re-

markable is the uniform proportion of males and females in the human race! and how kind the providence which multiplies the creatures useful to man, while lions and tigers, whales and sharks, are comparatively few!

The moral government of God is still more wonderful. To his power in restraining evil spirits we owe much of our safety and comfort. We are more sensible of his power in restraining wicked men. Bad as the world is, it would be infinitely worse, if God did not withhold bad men from their purposes; but all hearts are in his hand. He that restrains the raging waves of the sea, subdues also the madness of the people. "The floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves; but the Lord on high is mightier than the noise of many waters; yea, than the mighty waves of the sea." Ps. xciii. 3, 4.

The power of God was in ancient times most marvellously displayed in the miracles, which were wrought for wise and great purposes. He who gave laws to nature, can suspend or reverse them if he thinks fit. Once he permitted the waters to cover the whole earth, and drown its guilty inhabitants; again, he restrained the floods and caused them to retire. By a train of most wonderful works he rescued Israel from the yoke of Egypt, formed a path for them through the Red Sea, and sustained them for forty years in the wilderness. When he commands, waters shall not drown, fire shall not consume, lions shall not devour. The miracles of Christ exceeded all others, for he was power itself in a human form. "The blind received their sight, and the lame walked; the lepers were cleansed, and the deaf heard; the dead were raised up, and to the poor the Gospel was preached." Matt. xi. 5. Now in that Gospel, so confirmed, we shall find the grandest displays of divine power, and those in which we are most concerned. We proceed then, in the third place, to consider,

III. The power of God, as it shines in the redemption of sinful men by Jesus Christ.

Observe this power in the person of the great Redeemer. The production of his human nature, in the womb of the Virgin, is ascribed (Luke i. 45) "to the power of the Highest," that is, of the Holy Spirit; in consequence of which, though he "was made of a woman," and made "in the likeness of sinful flesh," his nature was without sin, and "that holy thing" which was born, was the pure and immaculate Son of God. Wonderful was the power

which preserved him from his cruel and implacable enemies, for he constantly endured the opposition of men and devils; nor could any of his adversaries prevail against him, till "his hour was come;" that appointed hour when, "according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, "with wicked hands" they crucified "the Lord of glory." Nor could death itself detain "the Lord of life;" he burst asunder the bars of the grave, and by his resurrection, more than by all that went before, "he was declared to be the Son of God with power."

When we consider the first planting of our holy religion in the world, by instruments so feeble, and notwithstanding obstacles so great, we shall see with what propriety the Gospel is said to be "the power of God unto salvation." The apostles were plain men, who had been under the instruction of Christ for three or four years, and were well qualified to teach mankind; but they had not the sanction of learning, the eloquence of orators, nor the authority of the magistrate. They had to encounter the deeply rooted prejudices of the Jews; the superstition, idolatry, hatred, and vices of the heathen; the customs of the world, the laws of nations, and the interests of priests, aided by all the malice, cunning, and cruelty of the great destroyer, whose kingdom and influence among men the Gospel was intended to subvert. But they went forth in the name of Jesus, filled with his love, inspired by his Spirit, animated by his promise, and the weapons of their warfare, altogether spiritual, became "mighty, through God, to destroy the strongest holds of the devil;" even in Jerusalem, where Christ was crucified, many thousands were converted to him. In Cæsarea, in Antioch, in Corinth, in Ephesus, in Alexandria, and even in Rome, Christian churches were formed; the altars of the idols were abandoned; and the Gospel triumphed over millions of souls!

But it concerns us most of all to trace the effects of divine power in the application of the Gospel to the heart; without which, its publication to the world, and its preservation to this day, will not avail to our personal salvation.

The Gospel is designed to produce a great inward change. The corruption of our nature renders this change absolutely necessary; and it is a change so considerable, as to be called in Scripture "a new creation;" this, of course, can be effected only by the power of God, and therefore, true converts are said to be made "will-

ing in the day of his power." Ps. cx. 3 The mind of man, in his natural state, is in darkness, unacquainted with the way of salvation through faith in Christ, and frequently contentedly ignorant; yea, wilfully ignorant; for there is an unhappy aversion to the truth, a strong prejudice against it, insomuch that many persons "love darkness rather than light." There is a strange dislike to private religion—the reading of the Bible, and prayer; while in some persons there is a strong attachment to vanity, to gaiety, to amusements; in others, vicious habits are formed, and wilful sins indulged. Some are profane, and venture without fear of the threatened punishment, to take the holy name of God in vain, perhaps to utter curses on themselves or others. Some, in open defiance of divine authority, instead of remembering the Sabbath-day to keep it holy, turn their backs on their Maker, and prove that they love him not, by preferring their pleasures to his service and worship, to the utter neglect of their souls and salvation. Others launch out still further into the ocean of vice, and plunge themselves into guilty pleasures and filthy vices, to which God has annexed everlasting punishment. The multitude among us, it may be feared, forget God; they live without God in the world; and their hearts are as far from him as those of the Pagans themselves.

Taking this view of things, we are ready to say, as did the prophet, "Can these dry bones live?" Can these careless souls become diligent disciples of Christ? Can their love of vanity be cured? "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" Can the habits of profaneness, of drunkenness, of uncleanness, be subdued? Can these vain and worldly people be so changed, that they may love what once they hated, and hate what once they loved? Can they become pure, pious, spiritual, humble, zealous followers of the Lamb? Can they be induced to resist the claims of self-interest, and endure the scornful smile, the harsh insults, and the cruel mockings of gay companions and displeased relations?—Yes. All this has been done, and may be done again. What! if it be impossible with men? All things are possible with God. "He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God." 2 Cor. iv. 6. And the Gospel, attended by the energy of the Holy Spirit, "casts down imaginations (or reasonings) and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and brings into cap-

tivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." 2 Cor. x. 5.

"But," it may be asked by a penitent sinner, "can an offender so guilty and vile be pardoned, and received into the divine favor? Can crimes like mine be blotted out, and remembered no more?" Yes. The Son of Man when on earth had power to forgive sins: nor has he less power in heaven; he has power to give eternal life to all who are given to him; and as he never rejected a penitent sinner when he lived among men, neither will he now; for "he is exalted to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins," and he has graciously said, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

One exertion more of divine power let us contemplate. When Moses saw a bush on fire, and yet it was not consumed, he turned aside to behold it with admiration. In that burning bush he beheld the emblem of Israel afflicted in Egypt, yet not destroyed; and we may perceive in it an emblem of a true Christian, "kept by the power of God, through faith to salvation." And what but the power of God is sufficient for this purpose? If you consider what a dangerous world we live in, where iniquity abounds, where prosperity presents a thousand snares, and adversity a thousand temptations; when you remember that Satan, "like a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour:" and, above all, when you recollect that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," you will rejoice to think that the great and good shepherd of the flock hath said of his sheep, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." In that almighty hand the believer is safe; "he is able to keep us from falling;" to "keep what we have committed to his care;" to support us under all the trials of life; to comfort our souls in the article of death; and to complete the whole redemption at the last day—when "he shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working, whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Phil. iii. 21.

What then shall we say to these things? What use shall we make of our meditations on the almighty power of God? Let him be adored; let him be feared; let him be trusted.

Let him be adored. He, and he alone, is the proper object of religious worship. Observe and admire his power wherever

you see it; and where can you look without seeing it? Wisdom and power among men command our respect; we reverence the wise and the mighty; and shall we not reverence and adore *Him*, who is infinite in wisdom, and almighty in power? We admire the princes of this world, mortal as they are, who command numerous armies, govern extensive empires, conquer powerful enemies, and preserve their own people in peace; should we not then admire and adore the Lord of Hosts, who rules among the armies of heaven, and over the inhabitants of the earth; whose wisdom none can fathom, whose power none can resist? Yes, "Him shall you worship, and to him shall you do sacrifice." Adore and praise him, and say, with the heavenly worshippers who bow before his throne, and cast their crowns at his feet, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created." Rev. iv. 11.

Let this Almighty God be feared. Fear not man, who can do nothing but as permitted. "Fear not man," said our Savior, "but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear, fear him who, after he hath killed the body, can cast both body and soul into hell: yea, I say unto you, fear him." O the folly and madness that possess the hearts of men, who dare rebel against him, break his commandments, abuse his goodness, defy his anger, and neglect his salvation! The almighty power of God renders the thoughts of his being our enemy insupportably terrible. He who has "revealed his wrath against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men," is able at any time, and by any means, to execute his threatenings; for "He is strong that executeth his word." If he is pleased to give commission to thunders and lightnings, to storms and tempests, to earthquakes or plagues, floods and fires, to destroy his enemies, who can "stay his hand," or restrain his power? Ah! "who ever hardened his heart against him, and prospered?" "Consider this, then, ye that forget God; lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." "Set not the briars and thorns against him in battle, lest he go through them, and burn them together; but take hold of his strength, and make peace with him." Say, poor sinner, "Can thine heart endure, and thine hands be strong, when he shall deal with thee?" or, "Is there any that can deliver out of his hand?" Be wise now, therefore; be instructed. Submit at once; and seek his

pardoning mercy through Christ, "lest you perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." But, finally,

"Blessed are they that put their trust in him." Yes, "trust in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength." What cannot he do, who is almighty? "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" Imitate the faith of Abraham, who could confide in the power of God, when probabilities were all against him, "being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform." Thus, the noble confessors in Daniel's time were courageous for Jehovah, being assured that the God whom they served was able to preserve them, even in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace. Our faith should bear some proportion to the object of it. How inconsistent is a strong God and weak faith! When our Savior was about to exert his miraculous power in healing, he proposed this question, "Believest thou that I am able to do this?" So should we ask ourselves when we desire any thing from God. Do I believe that God is able to fulfil my request? Faith will be feeble, and prayer will be lifeless, if the power of God be forgotten; and be encouraged by reflecting that the exercise of almighty power is intrusted to the hands of Jesus Christ. He has "all power in heaven and in earth;" he is therefore "able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him." His blood is so efficacious, that it can cleanse from the utmost possible degree of guilt; his grace so powerful, that it can rescue from the utmost power of sin; he can save to the utmost extent of our wishes and capacities, to the utmost period of life; yea, he can and will continue to bless his people to the most distant ages of eternity. Be not, therefore, afraid to trust him. Venture on him; he is the rock of ages. Cast your souls, your sins, your burdens on the Savior. "Trust in him at all times, ye people." "What time you are afraid, trust in him." "Seek unto God, and to God commit your cause; for he doeth great things, and unsearchable, marvellous things without number." Job v. 8, 9. "In every thing, by prayer and supplication, make known your requests unto him," encouraged by this declaration, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." "Unto him be glory in the church by Jesus Christ, throughout all ages, world without end." Amen.

desire to acknowledge and glorify thee, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. Thou also art the Preserver and Governor of all thy creatures. The innumerable tribes of beings which inhabit the air, the earth, and the water; these all wait upon thee, that thou mayest give them their food in due season. Thou also art the Ruler of the moral world; angels and men, yea devils, are under thy control; all human hearts are in thine hand, and thy throne ruleth over all. But while we bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life, we would, above all, adore and praise thee for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; we rejoice that Jesus is able to save to the uttermost; may we be saved from wrath through him; may we be delivered from the dominion of sin; may we be preserved from the wiles of the devil; and kept, by the power of God, through faith unto salvation. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,—unto him be glory in the church, by Jesus Christ, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

SERMON LXVIII.

THE WISDOM OF GOD.

Romans xvi. 27. To God, only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ. Amen.

WITH these words the apostle Paul concludes his most admirable and useful epistle to the Romans. Having expressed his good will towards the Christians then living in the city of Rome, he prays for the establishment of the Gospel among them; for which Gospel he ascribes glory to that infinitely wise God, who is the author of the Gospel, through Jesus Christ his Son, the great preacher and the great subject of it. "To God, only wise, be glory."

Our present business is to explain and improve the following truth:—

GOD IS A BEING POSSESSED OF INFINITE WISDOM.

Wisdom, in man, is that attainment of his mind whereby he is enabled to regulate all his actions in the best manner; to choose the best object, and to pursue it by the best means. It is the application of good knowledge to good purposes; it is acting according to a correct judgment; for there is a difference between knowledge and wisdom. Knowledge resides in the understanding; but wisdom relates to practice. Knowledge is therefore the foundation of wisdom. A man may have knowledge without wisdom; but he can-

PRAYER.—GLORIOUS Jehovah! Thou only art Almighty: thou canst do every thing. We

not have wisdom without knowledge, for wisdom is the right use of knowledge.

But knowledge and wisdom in the blessed God are inseparable. St. Paul puts them together, when he cries—"O the depth of the riches, both of the *wisdom and knowledge* of God!" Rom. xi. 33. His knowledge is infinite. "Great is our Lord, and of great power; his understanding is infinite." Ps. cxlvii. 5. God knows *himself*, and he *only* knows himself perfectly, for he only is infinite. He also knows all other things, whether they be past, or present, or to come. His judgment of all things is perfectly correct, and this regulates all his operations. He directs all things to their proper end, the end for which he gave them being; and this is his own glory: for, as he is the most excellent being, nothing can be so excellent an end as his own glory; and his wisdom so directs all beings and all occurrences, that this end shall be fully and finally accomplished. "*For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*" Rom. xi. 36.

In our text God is termed "*ONLY WISE*;" and in another place he is called "*The only wise God*;" for God alone is perfectly, universally, and constantly wise. In very ancient times, men, distinguished by superior learning and knowledge, were called *Sophoi*, that is, *wise*; but Pythagoras and Socrates, two of the most eminent of them, thought this too high a title to be given to any but God; and from that time they were known by the more modest name of *lovers of wisdom*, (*Philo-Sophoi*) or Philosophers. Wisdom is indeed "*The divine Royalty*." Strictly speaking, it belongs to God alone. As "*there is none good but one, that is, God*;" so there is none *wise* but him. Men have often boasted of their wisdom; but "*the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God*;" and "*he knoweth the reasonings of men that they are vain*," especially when they are opposed to his Gospel; and, on the other hand, "*the foolishness of God*," that is, the Gospel of Christ, profanely so called by some, is "*wiser than men*"—far wiser than any of the schemes devised by the *wit* of man. 1 Cor. i. 25; and iii. 19.

But we need not confirm this truth by referring to many other Scripture proofs, for it is what every man must admit; we shall rather show, in a few select instances, wherein the wisdom of God is displayed.

1. It is natural, in the first place, to refer to *the works of God*, which our eyes behold; and the slightest observation of

their nature and design will constrain us to say, "In wisdom hast thou made them all!"

Observe their *variety*, and say with the Psalmist, "O Lord, how *manifold* are thy works!" From the same original matter, the infinitely wise God has produced a vast variety of creatures and things. "Let the earth," said he, "bring forth grass, the herb, and the fruit-tree; and it was so. And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creatures that hath life, and fowls that may fly above the earth: let the earth bring forth cattle, beasts, and creeping things. And God said, Let us make man; and God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good." Gen. i. How different are the forms, the qualities, the colors, and the uses of the creatures of God! How numerous are the heavenly bodies; the inhabitants of the earth, of the air, and of the water: they all differ in their structure; but they all display the wonderful wisdom of their great Creator: a wisdom we cannot comprehend, "for no man can find out the work that God maketh, from the beginning to the end." Eccles. iii. 11.

The remarkable *fitness* of every thing which God has made, for its intended purpose, is another proof of his wisdom. It is impossible not to see the most evident marks of design and contrivance in the works of God. Every thing has its proper use, and every thing is perfectly adapted to that use. He hath formed the sun to give us light by day, and the moon by night; he causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth. That every tree and plant should produce its distinct and proper seed, to perpetuate the same species for future years, is an admirable provision of divine wisdom. "The sea also is his"—"the great and wide sea, wherein are creatures innumerable." "There go the ships," which render the sea the medium of union among the most distant nations, although it seems to separate one country from another; for, by navigation and commerce, the productions of different countries become a common stock, and wonderfully increase the comforts of man, while it employs the skill and industry of multitudes, facilitates friendly intercourse, and extends knowledge, especially that best kind of knowledge, the Gospel of Christ, which is the wisdom of God."

The changing seasons of the year are a wise and gracious appointment of Heaven, and are far more grateful than a constant

sameness. The frost of winter destroys noxious insects and weeds, braces the human body, and prepares the soil for a new crop. The returning spring renews the face of the earth, and inspires the heart of man with cheerfulness and pleasure. The warmth of summer ripens the succeeding productions of the garden and the field; and the autumn crowns the year with fruit and corn to reward the care and toil of the husbandman. The succession of night and day is pleasant and useful to man; he welcomes the day as the proper season of labor, and the night is no less welcome as the season of rest. All *night* would be intolerable, and all *day* would be extremely inconvenient. "The day is thine, the night also is thine; thou hast prepared the light and the sun; thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter." Ps. lxxiv. 16, 17.

The bodies of animals and all other living creatures, display the wisdom of God in a most wonderful manner. Some are formed to live in the water, an element that would destroy others. Birds are furnished with wings to soar aloft in the air; some animals live beneath the surface of the ground; but they all have organs suited to their destination; proper food is provided for their support, and they have sagacity to find it, and stomachs fitted to digest it. All this proceedeth from him who is excellent in counsel and wonderful in working.

The human frame is itself a world of wonders. Consider some of its parts. The bones are so firm that they support the whole body, yet so flexible that we can perform a vast variety of motions. The muscles, which are more than four hundred in number, have all their particular uses, yet never interfere with each other. The eye is an organ of such astonishing contrivance, that anatomists have called it "a sure cure for Atheism." The ear is no less wonderfully adapted to its office; its mechanism is extremely simple, but the variety of its effects is remarkably great. The process of digestion is surprising; the power of the stomach and other organs to turn so many different substances into chyle and blood, and thus to nourish life for many years, is truly amazing. The circulation of the blood is equally admirable. The heart has the power of forcing the blood into the arteries, and receiving it back from the veins, after it has visited the most distant and minute parts of the system; for this purpose it contracts and dilates its muscles, four thousand times in

every hour, making one hundred thousand strokes in every twenty-four hours; and continuing to do this, without weariness or disorder, for seventy or eighty years together. This wonderful machine is, generally speaking, kept in perfect order; for health requires the exact performance of every function. Little do we consider how much must go to produce the ease we generally enjoy. We need not wonder if at any time we are unwell; but, knowing the complicated machine of the body, we may wonder at a single hour's comfort and activity. Well may each of us say with the prophet, "I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well."

2. The wisdom of God is no less apparent in the work of providence than in that of creation. It requires the same skill to govern the world as to make it. The order and harmony of the universe can be ascribed only to the constant influence of the eternal mind; without which neither an empire rises, nor a sparrow falls. The world is like a vast machine, in which there are many millions of movements; some of which, to our mistaken view, seem to contradict each other; but, by the wisdom of the great Artificer, they all concur to accomplish his design, and to promote his glory.

But it is to MAN, and to man *as a fallen creature*, that we should chiefly direct our attention. How remarkable is the wisdom of God in conferring upon men those different abilities and inclinations, which tend to the general welfare of society! How wonderful is the restraint which he lays upon the wicked, without which, their ungoverned appetites and ferocious tempers would deluge the earth with misery and blood! but "he stilleth the noise of the waves, and the raging of the people."

The wisdom of God is frequently conspicuous in effecting the most grand and glorious designs by weak and feeble means, and even by the bad dispositions of men.

The envy and cruelty of Joseph's brethren, led the way to his advancement in Egypt, as did also the wickedness of Potiphar's wife. God turned the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness; so that what was proposed for the destruction of David, became the means of his safety. The luxury of some of the rich, provides labor and food for the poor; and the worst of human actions give occasion to the enactment of the most excellent laws. Perse-

cution itself, the vilest effort of human depravity, tends to the promotion of the Gospel, and "the blood of the martyrs becomes the seed of the church." Thus, even "the wrath of man is made to praise him, and the remainder thereof he is pleased to restrain."

3. But the wisdom of God is most of all illustrated in the grand affair of **HUMAN REDEMPTION**: other discoveries of it, however excellent, are as the dawning light of the morning, compared with that of the meridian sun, shining in its brightest splendor.

To restrain or lessen human evils, and render them tolerable, is no small effort of the wisdom of man; but the wisdom of God has brought out of greatest possible evil, the greatest possible good. He has made the apostasy of angels, the malice of devils, and the rebellion of man, the occasion of exhibiting all his glorious perfections, and especially his wisdom, to the utmost advantage. Nothing in all the world can be so evil, so detestable as sin; nothing so hurtful and horrible as its effects: and yet it has given occasion for the manifestation of divine wisdom, holiness, justice, patience, and mercy, beyond what we can conceive would have been possible, had not sin entered into the world.

Here then is the "hidden wisdom of God;" wisdom which the light of nature could never have discovered; and which our feeble intellect so imperfectly comprehends, that it still remains "the wisdom of God in a mystery." 1 Tim. i. 17; and 1 Cor. ii. 7. It is "the manifold wisdom of God"—displayed, not in a single act, but in a variety of counsels; the union of the most excellent ends and of the most excellent means. "He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence:"—wisdom in the contrivance, and prudence in the execution of the plan.

Nothing less than wisdom truly divine could have found out an expedient whereby "mercy and truth" (apparently contrary to each other) "should meet together; righteousness and peace," equally hostile to each other, "should meet and embrace." The claims of justice and of mercy are so opposite, that human wisdom could never have reconciled them. We may suppose justice to plead in the following manner:—"Dread Majesty of Heaven, I arraign, before thy awful tribunal, the rebel man. Made in thy image, richly favored by thy blessings, placed under a law, easy, righteous, and reasonable—bound by ten thousand ties to love and

serve thee, he has listened to the tempter, wilfully transgressed thy commandments, dishonored thy government, and filled thy whole creation with folly, and sin, and woe. I demand his life. It is forfeited. He well deserves to die: and die he *must*; or what becomes of thy truth, which declared he *should* die? What becomes of thy holiness, should he not die? What world of thine will hereafter believe that thou art holy, or just, or true? I demand therefore that he die."

But Mercy, smiling, appears. "I too," saith she, "have my plea to offer. It is true, man hath sinned, and deserves to die. But is there no room for the exercise of pity and compassion? Justice is already displayed in the punishment of fallen angels; let that suffice. Permit mercy also to be exhibited to the universe. Now there is an admirable opportunity for it, for without misery there can be no mercy. Show pity, then, to miserable man. Shall devils for ever triumph? Shall they boast that, by one daring stroke, they have spoiled the six days' labor of a God; and this fair globe, adorned with a profusion of thy choicest gifts, become a mere wilderness of woe, a charnel-house of destruction, and nothing more than the porch of hell? O listen to Mercy, and let the rebel sinne live!"

Now who can adjust these jarring claims? If one be gratified, it must be at the expense of the other. If man must perish, what becomes of mercy? If man be pardoned, what becomes of justice?

Only the wisdom of God can devise a satisfactory expedient. The wisdom of God saith, "I will satisfy you both. The pleas of justice shall be satisfied in the punishment of sin; and the pleas of mercy shall be satisfied in the pardon of sin. Justice shall not complain for want of punishment; nor mercy for want of compassion. I will provide a sacrifice which shall satisfy justice; and the virtue of that sacrifice shall gratify Mercy. Justice shall have punishment to accept, and Mercy shall have pardon to bestow. The rights of both shall be secured; and the demands of both shall amicably accord in punishment and pardon, by transferring the punishment of the sinner to his Surety. Justice shall exact a recompense from his blood, while life and salvation shall be granted by Mercy to the sinner, without the expense of one drop of his own." Behold, therefore, the goodness and the severity of God! The riches of grace are entwined with the terrors of wrath. God

is righteous without being cruel, and merciful without being unjust. His righteousness inviolate, and the world recovered.*

How marvellous is the wisdom of God in the provision of a SAVIOR in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ? Who so proper to restore the world as he who made it? Who so qualified to renew the divine image, as he who first impressed it? Who so fit to intercede with God, as his dearly beloved Son? Who so proper to redeem the forfeited inheritance, as the "Heir of all things?"

The union of the two natures, human and divine, in the person of Christ, appears to be admirably adapted to the great purpose designed. "He is Immanuel—God with us;" he was therefore qualified, as an umpire, to lay his hand upon both parties. By the one nature, he was fitted for "things pertaining to God," by the other, he was capable of sympathizing with men. He had a nature capable of suffering, and a nature which could render his sufferings infinitely meritorious. Had he not been man, he could not have suffered and died; had he not been more than man, his sufferings and death could have been of no avail.

In the death of Christ we behold the righteousness of the law perfectly fulfilled (Rom. viii. 3;) so that "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, by the obedience of one, many were made righteous." And in this way, God manifested to the world, in one act, the strongest hatred to sin, and the greatest love to the sinner. Here is infinite love and infinite hatred condemning with awful severity the sin to what it deserved, and advancing the sinner himself to undeserved, unexpected, and everlasting happiness; consuming the sin, and recovering the sinner; and doing all this by instruments who had no such intention. Satan is overthrown by his own hands; he that had "the power of death," is himself destroyed "by death;" by his cross, Jesus wrests the crown of dominion from the prince of darkness: Satan is altogether baffled, and the agents he inspired to effect his plans, are completely disappointed. It was "by wicked hands, that Jesus was crucified and slain;" but thus "the counsel and foreknowledge of God were fulfilled," and the church of God ransomed by the blood of his Son.

Nor is the wisdom of God less conspicuous in the ways and means by which the redemption of Christ is applied to the hearts of men. How simple and plain is that glorious gospel, which is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth! The great salvation was not published by men famous for worldly wisdom; it was not by the force of human eloquence, or by the influence of human authority, that men were converted; but "this treasure was put into earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might plainly appear to be of God, and not of man." For the same reason, Faith is appointed to be the instrument of our justification; for Faith assumes no merits of its own; it simply and humbly receives the divine testimony, and with it the blessings promised, "without money and without price;" and "therefore it is of faith, that it may be by grace."

The wisdom of God has adapted the Gospel to promote, in the most powerful manner, the practice of holiness and good works. While a salvation of pure grace is bestowed upon men, and becomes the ground of their confidence and the source of their hopes, they are powerfully induced and enabled to glorify God by their holy obedience. A true acquaintance with the gospel produces in the heart love both to God and men. Nothing is so powerful as love; and the love of God to us, if "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost," must and will effect a return of love and gratitude to God; and if we love him, we shall keep his commandments, for this is the proper fruit of faith, and the best evidence of our sincerity.

CONCLUSION.

LET us improve the subject in three ways:—*Adore the wisdom of God; Rely on the wisdom of God; and Implore wisdom of God.*

1. *Adore the wisdom of God.* Where can you turn your eyes without beholding it? Behold it in every object around you. Look at creation with this design, that the Creator, infinitely wise and good, may be adored. Thus shall "the whole world become a temple, and life itself be one continued act of adoration." But it is in "the new creation" that wisdom most brightly shines: it is "through Jesus Christ," as the text expresses it; through him, as the light of the world, God shines upon us; and through him, as our Mediator, let our honors be paid to God.

2. *Rely on the wisdom of God.* In the

* These thoughts, with many others in the course of these Sermons, are borrowed from the admirable CHARNOCK on the Attributes of God. See particularly vol. i. page 383, &c.

common affairs of life we have frequent occasion for advice; and we gladly avail ourselves of the wisdom of a friend, of a physician, of a counsellor: but O! what a privilege is it to a Christian, that the God of wisdom presides over the world, over the church, and over his private affairs! Commit then thy way to the Lord. Trust in him at all times, even at the worst of times. He knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation: he knows how to make all things work together for good. "The Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him." Finally,

3. *Ask wisdom of God*; so he directs us to do. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, and it shall be given him." We need wisdom in all our concerns, and should seek direction in the management of all our affairs; but chiefly, we need it for our souls; for mistakes in religion are of all others the most dangerous. God has favored us with the Bible, which is his own book of wisdom, and it is able to make us "wise unto salvation;" but we also need "the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation," to guide us into all truth, and to glorify Jesus, by revealing him to us as the way, the truth, and the life.—May we know, and love, and serve him on earth! daily increasing in true wisdom, and rejoicing in hope of a superior state, where our faculties shall be enlarged, and our knowledge improved; and where, with infinite gratitude, we shall adopt the doxology in our text:—*To God, only wise, be glory, through Jesus Christ.* Amen.

PRAYER.—O THOU that dwellest in the heavens, thou art God, only wise; thy understanding is infinite; we behold it in the works of thy hands; in wisdom hast thou made them all; and when all were finished, thou didst pronounce them all to be very good. We adore thy wisdom as it appears in all thy creatures, and we will praise thee especially on our own account, for we are fearfully and wonderfully made. By thee, O God, the universe is preserved and governed: and without thee neither an empire rises nor a sparrow falls. And all affairs of mankind are under thy direction and control; even the wrath of man is made to praise thee, while the remainder thereof is mercifully restrained. But in the salvation of sinful men, by Jesus Christ, we discern the manifold wisdom of God: we behold it in the person of the Savior, uniting in himself the two natures, human and divine; and glorifying in his mediatorial work, both justice and mercy, that God might be just, while justifying the ungodly.

We adore thy wisdom O God, though we can never fully comprehend it. We entreat wisdom from thee to direct us in all our ways, and especially to make us wise unto salvation; and with humble confidence we would rely on thy wisdom,

and trust in thee at all times; for the Lord is a God of judgment; blessed are all they that wait for him. Now to God, only wise, be glory, through Jesus Christ, for ever. Amen.

SERMON LXIX.

THE HOLINESS OF GOD.

Isaiah vi. 3. Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts.

ALL the divine attributes are equally necessary to the perfection of his nature; and it may be improper to exalt any one of them above the rest: but it may be remarked, that no attribute of God is expressed in Scripture as his holiness is—no attribute is so awfully proclaimed:—it is thrice repeated in a single sentence: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts." We find this doxology in the account of a most remarkable vision, which Isaiah, the prophet, saw. "I saw the Lord," saith he, "sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the Seraphim;—and one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." This is applied to Jesus Christ, in the gospel of St. John, where it is written, "These things said Esaias when he saw his glory, and spake of him." John xii. 41. We find another doxology of a similar kind, in Rev. iv. 8; where celestial beings are represented as giving glory to God, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." From these and many other texts of Scripture, we learn a great and important doctrine, which we shall attempt to illustrate and improve; namely, that

The great God is infinitely pure and holy.

By holiness, in the blessed God, we mean, that essential rectitude of his nature, whereby he takes infinite delight and pleasure in that which is pure and holy; and hates, with a perfect hatred, every thing which is morally evil.

We consider holiness as essential, or absolutely necessary, to the very being and existence of God. We can have no right conception of a God without holiness. A God without holiness would be like a God without power, or a God without wisdom: it would be a monster, not a God. Many of the idols, or pretended gods of the heathens, were indeed unholy; they were abominably impure; the patterns and the patrons of detestable vices; and therefore it is said in the song of Moses—"Who is

like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods?—who is like unto thee—*glorious in holiness!*” The holiness of God is the glory of God; it is the glory of all his other perfections; of his power; hence we read of “his holy arm:” of his truth; hence we read of “his holy promise:” of his justice; for he is righteous in all “his ways, and holy in all his works.” We say therefore that God is essentially holy; and it would be less absurd to say, There is no God, than to say, God is not holy.

Holiness is *originally* in God. If angels are holy, God made them so. If believers are holy, God made them so. But the holiness of God is not derived; it was eternally, originally, and unchangeably in him. Some of the holy angels sinned, and are become devils. Man, who was made holy at first, is now become an impure sinner; and the holiest creatures in the world, if left to themselves, might become unholy: but God is eternally holy; there is “no variableness with him, neither shadow of turning.”

Let us now produce some evidence of this truth—some satisfactory proof that God is holy. And we may easily obtain this from the uniform testimony of the sacred Scriptures—from the original condition of all rational creatures—from the holy law which God has given to men—from the anger he has manifested against unholy sinners—from the atonement made for sin by the death of Christ—and from the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of believers.

1. The holiness of God appears from the positive, uniform, repeated testimony of the sacred writers, in the Scriptures of truth. The great God himself, in whose light alone we see light, asserts his own character, and proclaims his own name. “I, the Lord your God, am holy.” “I am the Lord, the holy one of Israel, your Savior.” This is ever the sanction of his holy commandments,—“Be ye holy, for I am holy.” We need not multiply texts: the holy writers, inspired by the Holy Spirit himself, concur with the Seraphim in the text,—one of whom cried unto another, and said, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory;” and observe, so awfully, so loudly was this proclamation made, that “the posts of the door,” or the massy pillars of the temple, “moved at the voice of him that cried;” while the holy prophet himself trembled and said, “Wo is me! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts;”—that is, the holy “WORD,” who

was afterwards “made flesh, and dwelt among us.” Such will ever be the humbling effect of right views of the holiness of God!

2. We refer to the original state of all rational and immortal beings. When formed by him, they were holy; for nothing morally evil could proceed from the pure hands of a holy God. The innumerable hosts of angels were created pure. Those who still retain their first estate are called “the holy angels;” and those who fell were originally such. As to man, before his creation, “God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness,” and accordingly—“God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him.” Gen. i. 26, 27. It is no impeachment of the holiness of God, that he permitted his creatures to fall. All creatures are in their very nature changeable. God only is incapable of change. But though “God made man upright,” yet he was capable of “seeking out many inventions.” He was able to stand, yet capable of falling. He was created with a will perfectly free; he was capable of loving God and keeping his commandments; there was a light in his understanding, a rectitude in his heart, a rule to act by; a promise to encourage him to obedience, and a threatening to deter him from sin. More was not necessary; his defection must be charged on himself: God is holy.

3. Consider the nature of the law, originally given to man in Paradise, and, long after, renewed at Sinai.

The substance of the eternal, unchangeable law of God is—“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself.” Less than this, a holy God cannot demand; less than this a holy creature cannot desire. The holiness of God was strongly expressed in the method which he took to secure the holiness of Adam, and, in him, the holiness of all his posterity. What could have been a stronger inducement to obedience, than the hope of everlasting happiness for himself and all mankind? What a more powerful guard against sin, than the certain and eternal ruin of himself and all his race?

“The law,” renewed, and awfully published at Sinai, “is holy, and just, and good.” It is the rule of holiness. By this we learn what is holy or unholy, especially when we learn that it is “spiritual,”—that it reaches to the secret thoughts of the heart, and condemns even an evil desire. Thus, St. Paul assures us that he was convinced of sin, “because the law hath said, Thou shalt not covet.” This obliged him

to cry, "The law is spiritual, but I am carnal." "The law entered that the offence might abound;" that men might be convinced how dreadfully their sins have abounded;—"and thus," saith he, "sin slew me," and "I died:"—"it was made death unto me, and sin, by the commandment, became exceeding sinful." See Rom. vii. 9—14. Surely, this holy law, which is called perfect, pure, clean, and "righteous," and armed with a dreadful curse against every transgressor, is an awful proof that God is holy. So, however, Moses, the man of God, thought, when witnessing the fire, and tempest, and terrible voice which attended the giving of the law at Sinai: he said, "I exceedingly fear and quake;" and thus every man will think who is acquainted with the extent of its demands, and sensible of his own innumerable transgressions.

4. Let us take a view of the holiness of God, as awfully displayed in his anger against sin and sinners.

The first display of this was, in the expulsion of rebel angels from their thrones of glory. "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment:" they "kept not their first estate," and were therefore expelled from "their own habitation." What a dreadful proof do those once illustrious, and now degraded spirits, exhibit to the whole spiritual world, of God's unconquerable and everlasting aversion to sin!

And see, with horror and surprise, man seduced by the devil, involved in the same condemnation. Well might Adam tremble at the sound of the once delightful voice of his Maker, when he approached, and cried, "Adam, where art thou?" "What is this that thou hast done?" and still more, when, dragged from his vain refuge, and in spite of his vain excuses, he hears the holy offended God say, "Cursed is the serpent—cursed is the ground;" yet, not altogether cursed is poor apostate man: he is doomed indeed to severe labor and toils; and the penurious earth refuses to afford him bread, but at the expense of the sweat of his brow; the deluded woman also, first in the transgression, is doomed to be the subject of multiplied sorrows, pains, and infirmities.

When men were greatly increased, and sin became universal and triumphant, we see the holy God so provoked, that "it repented him he had made man, and it grieved him at the heart:" "he looked on the earth, and behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way:" "then

were the windows of heaven opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the waters prevailed exceedingly, and every living substance was destroyed in which was the breath of life. Noah only remained alive, and they that were with him in the ark." What a dreadful proof was this that the holy God was angry with the wicked!

Remember the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah. "Their sin was very grievous,—their cry was great;" and their crimes so general, that not ten righteous men could be found. "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire, from the Lord out of Heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the cities; and the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace." Gen. xix. 24. But he delivered righteous Lot.

When the Canaanites had filled up the measure of their iniquities, he punished them with the sword of Joshua, and expelled them from their fruitful land, which flowed with milk and honey.

And when the children of Israel, though God's peculiar people, forgot their duty to him, indulged in vice, or forsook his worship, he delivered them into the hands of the Philistines or of the Assyrians; and at one time consigned them to captivity for seventy years in Babylon; and at length, when they crucified the Lord of glory, rejected his gospel, and forbade it to be preached to the Gentiles, he brought upon them the fury of the Romans, burnt their temple, destroyed their city, and dispersed them, the most miserable of mankind, among all the nations of the earth. Every Jew you see may remind you that God is holy.

Mark also, how this holy Lord God has chastised some of his dear children, eminent saints, when they have indulged unholy tempers, or committed unholy actions. Moses, who spake unadvisedly with his lips, was not permitted to enter the goodly land he longed for. Jonah, when he deserted his duty, was imprisoned in the whale's belly: and David, when he fell into some gross sins, was severely visited, and the bloody sword was entailed upon his family. The holy God hates sin wherever he sees it, but most of all when he sees it in his children; as a gardener hates a weed the more, when he finds it in a bed of his choicest flowers. God is indeed reconciled to the sinner who believes, but he is never reconciled to his sins; he loves his person, but he hates his vices. Surely, then, believers should avoid even the appearance of evil, for they serve a holy God.

5. But we must visit Calvary, if we would behold at once the most awful, and the most engaging display of divine holiness. "Not all the vials of judgments which were ever poured out on the guilty world, nor the irreversible sentence pronounced against rebellious devils, nor the groans of damned sinners, afford such a demonstration of God's hatred to sin, as the sufferings of Christ on the accursed tree." It was because he was infinitely displeased with sin, that "the Lord was pleased to bruise his Son, and put him to grief." It was holiness that drew the veil between the Father's countenance and the Savior's soul, when horrible darkness covered the earth, and he cried, in the bitterness of his broken heart, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" God's affection to his holiness seemed, in this instance, to surmount his affection to his Son. Rather should his well-beloved Son expire on a disgraceful cross, than sin should be suffered to live, and his holiness be disparaged by the violations of his law. Thus was sin made the chief mark of his displeasure, while the poor sinner becomes the happy object of his pitiful regard. The odiousness of sin is exposed, while the compassion of his heart is displayed. His infinite abhorrence of sin, and his infinite love to the sinner, go hand in hand together. Thus "Mercy and Truth meet together"—Mercy to the misery of the sinner, Truth to the purity of the law. "Righteousness and Peace embrace each other"—the righteousness of God, and the peace of the believers in Jesus; and thus "there is forgiveness with God, *that he may be feared.*" And this leads us to the last evidence we shall produce of the holiness of God.

6. The holiness of God appears in the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers, and in all means appointed for that purpose.

God, who, from eternity, designed the everlasting happiness of his people, decreed that they should be holy; "he predestinated them to be conformed to the image of his Son." Rom. viii. 29. For this purpose he gave his Son, and his Son gave himself, that "he might purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." It was impossible that Jesus Christ, who is "the Holy One of Israel," should become "the minister of sin," or even permit the purchased of his blood to remain the slaves of corruption: he came "by water as well as by blood;" (1 John vi. 6;) and intended, by the power of his death and resurrection, to introduce us not only into a relative state of happiness by justifi-

cation, but also into a real state of grace by sanctification." "For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. vi. 10.

For this purpose also the Holy Spirit is given to all believers; for if "any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." It is by the gospel of truth that men are begotten again, and made new creatures; "for of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures." James i. 18. The gospel of the free grace of God, which some mistaken persons charge with an unholy tendency, is the very instrument of renewing them in holiness after the image of God. The Savior promised that his disciples should know the truth, and that the truth should make them free; and again he prayed for his disciples, saying, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." John xvii. 17. The faith which they have in Christ, if true and genuine, has always this effect: "it purifies the heart;" "it works by love;" "it overcomes the world." If men, professing to receive the truth, and to believe in Christ, are not holy, we are bold to say that their knowledge is not true, their faith is not genuine. They deceive themselves, and the truth is not in them.

All the ordinances of God's appointment and all the means of grace, private as well as public, are instruments in the hand of the Holy Spirit to promote the holiness of believers. They are properly called "means of grace;" for in the diligent use of them, God is pleased to communicate those "supplies of his Spirit," by which we are gradually and progressively transformed into his image, "from glory to glory."

For the same blessed end, he who governs the world, and orders all its affairs according to his all-wise and all holy plan, so directs and overrules the affairs of his people, that "all things work together for their good." They certainly do so, when they promote and increase their holiness. This is particularly affirmed of their afflictions; for though these are irksome, and what we would gladly avoid, yet, "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Afflictions are, indeed, "not joyous, but grievous;" nevertheless, "they yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness," and thus he who inflicts them, makes us "partakers of his holiness." Heb. xii. 6. 10, 11.

Thus then it appears from the Scripture,

from the original state of man, from the law, from God's anger against sin, from the death of Christ, and from the work of the Spirit—that our God is a most holy God.

We conclude with some practical inferences from what has been advanced; and,

1. *Is God so holy? Then how base and sinful is the hatred of holiness!* So awfully is man fallen, that he is not only by nature destitute of holiness, but he hates it in others. He forms a false notion of God, as if he were not holy. It is charged upon the sinner (Ps. l. 21.) "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself,"—an unholy being, that could dispense with sin; as the heathens worshipped fancied gods who were wicked like themselves. No wonder, then, that those who love sin, hate holiness in others. Hence, all endeavors to be holy, are despised, by many persons, as mere hypocrisy; and the very name, *a saint*, is a term of the utmost contempt. A surer sign of being, at present, a child of the devil, there cannot be, than to hate and despise holiness; for this is to hate and despise God himself, for he is holy, and holiness is his image. But let it be remembered, that "without holiness, no man can see the Lord;" and, most assuredly, they are "without holiness" themselves, who despise it in others. Let such persons tremble, and repent.

2. *Is God so holy? then what cause is there for humiliation!* Let all men, let even the best of men, prostrate themselves in deep humiliation before this holy Lord God. So did the holy prophet Isaiah, when he saw the vision in the text, and heard the words of it pronounced. "Woe is me!" said he, "for I am a man of unclean lips!" So, when the holy Job had a special manifestation of the power and holiness of God, he cried, Behold, I am vile! I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." A right view of the holiness of God will effectually repress the pride of our minds, and keep us from boasting of good hearts and good works, and from "going about to establish our own righteousness." "Shall mortal man pretend to be just with God?" Shall he pretend to be pure in his sight? Far be it. Deep repentance and self-abhorrence better become him.

3. *We may learn from hence the need of a Mediator and Redeemer.* If we are duly impressed with the truth now declared, we shall cry, with the Bethshemites of old, "Who can stand before this holy Lord God?" Who indeed? In themselves, none can stand. The best man must say

with David, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." There can be no safe approach to this holy God, but by Jesus Christ the Mediator. "No man," said he, "cometh to the Father but by me." But, blessed be God, we may come, we are invited thus to come. God has declared himself to be reconciled through the death of his Son; and now, by his servants, condescends to entreat us to be reconciled to him. Yes we may now come; come even with freedom and boldness to the throne of his grace, and there obtain mercy to pardon all our sins, and grace to help us in every time of need.

4. Finally. *Is God holy? then let us be also holy.* Such is the high command of God himself—"Be ye holy, for I am holy." This should be our grand object. Here is the bright, the only perfect example, for our imitation. For this purpose, being born in sin, we must needs "be born again"—born of the Holy Spirit, whose gracious influence on the heart, through faith in the gospel, makes us a kind of "new creatures"—brings us, as it were, into a new world; for such is it to every one who, contrary to the example of the world, sincerely hates sin and loves holiness.

This will render our worship truly holy. "Holiness becometh the house of God for ever." Let us then "worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;" let us "praise his great and terrible name, for he is holy;" let us "sing his praises with understanding." Let us also aim at still higher degrees of purification,—still beholding in the gospel, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, May we be "changed into the same image, from glory to glory,"—"perfecting holiness in the fear of God!"

"Now, the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever." Amen.

PRAYER.—HOLY, holy, holy art thou, O Lord God Almighty, the whole earth is full of thy glory! But O how shall sinful man approach thee, for thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Shame and confusion of face belong to us; for behold we are vile, we abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes.

Thou, O God, didst make man holy; thy law is holy; thy judgments pronounced and executed upon rebel angels and fallen men, and the chastisements of thy people, all evince thy holiness; but we behold it in the most awful manner on

Calvary, when it pleased thee to bruise thy dear Son, and make our iniquities meet upon him, that by his stripes we might be healed. But, blessed be thy name, that, through his death, we have now boldness to enter into the holiest of all, and may draw near to thee, as our heavenly Father. And now, we beseech thee to give us, according to thy gracious promise, thy Holy Spirit, that by his effectual working we may be sanctified in body, soul, and spirit; and thus 'be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; and being changed into thy holy image, from glory to glory, we may be for ever with and like our Lord; who with the Father, and Holy Ghost, is one God over all, blessed for ever. Amen.

SERMON LXX.

THE JUSTICE OF GOD.

Deuteronomy xxxii. 3. Just and right is he.

JUSTICE, among men, is giving to every one his due; and the importance of doing so, is acknowledged by every honest man. It is easy to see that there could be no safety nor happiness in society, if justice were not regarded. If there are any persons who do not approve of the administration of justice, it is probable that they themselves are unjust. The character of a judge may not be very amiable in the eyes of a criminal prisoner, and he may not look forward to the approaching assizes with any degree of pleasure; he would perhaps be willing to dispense with the whole system of justice in our laws, because he is exposed to the punishment which those laws require; but honest and virtuous men highly approve of the execution of justice. They regulate all their affairs, in their dealings with men, by a regard to justice; and they wish to be treated in the same manner by their neighbors. This general regard to justice, this tribute of mankind to its excellence, leads us naturally to conclude that it must have the sanction of divine authority, and that it must be a perfection of the divine nature; and we could as easily conceive of a God without power, or a God without goodness, as of a God without justice. We are not left, however, to the mere conjectures or conclusions of reason; we have the fullest authority from God's own word, to assure us that he is perfectly just. The assertion is made in the text, which is taken from the song of Moses; not that which was sung immediately after the passage of Israel through the Red Sea, but that which he uttered just before his death, and solemnly delivered to the people. He begins the sacred ode by ascrib-

ing glory to God; first, the glory of his greatness; and here, the glory of his justice and righteousness.

By the justice of God, we understand that universal rectitude of his nature, whereby, in his government of the world, he does all things with perfect righteousness, giving to every one his due.

1. We are to consider God, not only as the Maker and Preserver of men, but as their *Governor* also. He who made man, and furnished him with all his wonderful powers, has an undoubted right to prescribe laws for his conduct, and to enforce the laws which he prescribes by sufficient sanctions, by rewards and punishments, as in his infinite wisdom he sees fit; and in so doing he consults the good of his creatures, as well as his own glory; for as the peace and order of society cannot be maintained without human laws properly enforced, so we cannot conceive of the preservation of the divine government, without laws worthy of a wise, holy, and just God.

This right seems to have been exercised towards Adam at his creation. Besides the moral law, the substance of which is love to God and man, and which was written on his heart, a *positive* law was given to him as the test of his obedience. One particular tree, though as pleasant to the eyes and as good for food as others, was forbidden, and that on pain of death; for this positive law was armed with a dreadful sanction—"in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

In like manner, God has given laws to all mankind. For many ages they were handed down from father to son, and afterwards renewed to the Jews (and through them to a great part of the world) in an awful manner, at Sinai; and where men have not this written law, they have, as St. Paul assures us, "a law in themselves, the work of the law written on their hearts; and their consciences (more or less informed) accusing or excusing them," according as they observe it or break it. Rom. ii.

Now the law which God has given to man, is worthy of himself. It is said, in Rom. vii. 12, to be "Holy and Just, and Good;" it requires nothing but what God may justly demand of man; nothing but what we ought to pay: for, can any thing be more reasonable, than that we should love the supreme good in a supreme manner; and, loving him, should abstain from what he forbids, and perform what he requires; especially when both would be for our advantage, our safety, and our happi-

ness; and when disobedience would terminate only in our everlasting destruction; Thus, as the apostle saith, "the commandment was ordained unto life;"—"but," he adds, in words that well demand our serious regard—"I found it to be unto death." Rom. vii. For now, alas! man is a fallen creature: fallen in Adam, the first sinner; and is no longer able to render the full obedience required by the law. God, however, has not lost his right to command. His law, like himself, is unchangeable; and if not obeyed, renders the sinner liable to his just and awful displeasure.

2. We observe then, in the next place, that God is just in punishing disobedience to his holy law. As he sanctioned the law of Paradise, with that dreadful threatening, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;" so he sanctions the moral law with a terrible curse, as it is written (Gal. iii. 10.) "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, to do them." Observe, he who performs not *all things*, he who *continues* not to perform them all, without omitting one, without a single failure in thought, word, or deed; and, that this is the meaning of the passage, appears from another text in St. James (ch. ii. 10,) "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." The law has not relaxed in its demands, in consequence of the fall and frailty of man. Some have pretended that now *sincere obedience* only is required instead of perfect obedience; but this notion has no foundation in Scripture, and tends strongly to encourage sin; for most men, however sinful, flatter themselves that they are sincere, though imperfect. It is not by reducing the demands of the law, that a sinner is entitled to entertain hope of salvation; but by looking to him whom the Gospel sets before us as "the end of the law of righteousness," who has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." Gal. iii. 13. But the law itself affords no relief: it may convince; it must condemn; and it leaves every one, who seeks salvation by obedience to it, under its fearful curse. St. Paul therefore justly concludes (ver. 10,) that "as many as are under the law, are under the curse; and, "that every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." It is by the *Gospel*, and not by the law, that we obtain the knowledge of Christ, "whom God hath set

forth to be a propitiation for sins; that he might be *just*, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. iv. 19, 20—25.

3. If we consult the Scriptures, we shall find that God has displayed his justice, in many awful instances, by the punishment of sinners.*

The rebel angels were expelled from Heaven; they are awful monuments of his justice already; and will be rendered visibly such in the judgment of the great day. What a dreadful revolution did sin occasion in *our* world! See Adam cast out from Paradise; the earth cursed for his sake; the man doomed to severe labor; the woman to multiplied sorrows; the creature "made subject to vanity;" and trouble, sickness, and death, like a mighty flood, overwhelming all mankind.

When men had multiplied on the earth, sin seems to have preserved a sad proportion to their numbers; and wickedness rose to such a daring height, that Justice could no longer forbear, but opened the windows of Heaven, and unbarred the gates of the great abyss, and poured universal destruction on a guilty world.

At another time, fire from Heaven consumed the base inhabitants of Sodom; and the sword of Israel was the instrument of divine justice in the extirpation of the wicked Canaanites. Israel herself, highly favored as she was of God, could not escape his chastising hand, but always suffered when she sinned. It was divine justice that armed the Philistines, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Romans, and made them the severe scourges of an ungrateful and backsliding nation. In like manner, nation after nation, in their turn, having filled up the several measures of their iniquities, have declined and perished. Men ascribed their fall to the ambition of a neighboring conqueror; but the real cause was predominant sin, punished by the sword of divine justice.

It is true, that God does not always execute immediate justice on every transgressor; but this is no impeachment of that perfection, although it be abused by some: "because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, the hearts of men are fully set in them to do evil." It is possible that the impunity with which some atrocious rebels seem to sin, may stumble even believers themselves; who cry, in the

* The following instances are more briefly expressed, on account of their having been introduced in the sermon on God's Holiness; but it was not proper wholly to pass over them in a discourse on Divine Justice.

perplexity of their spirit, "Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper?" "How long, O Lord, shall the wicked triumph?" But they should remember that the Judge of all the earth will certainly do right. Sometimes the wicked may be spared as instruments of public good. Contrary to their intentions, they may eventually effect the purposes of Heaven. Besides, the present is a state of probation. God is giving them "time and space for repentance," and if they repent not, his arm that delays to strike, will fall with a heavier blow hereafter; and patience abused, will aggravate their future punishment.

Often, however, the great God convinces the world that he has not relinquished the government of it. His vengeance falls heavily on some distinguished rebels. Bloody persecutors have sometimes been signally cut off. Murderers have often been remarkably detected. Perjured wretches, and those who have called God to witness their falsehoods, have been suddenly destroyed; and Conscience, awakened and terrified, has frequently supplied the place of accusers, witnesses, judge, and executioner. Yes! and thus "God is known by the judgment that he executeth." Ps. ix. 16. "Verily, there is a God that judgeth on the earth."

Indeed, the operation of conscience, in general, among all the children of men, affords a striking evidence of the Justice of God. Why else is it that every man feels pleasure when he has performed a good action, and pain when he has committed a bad one? Conscience, like the grand jury in our excellent constitution, finds the bill that is afterwards to be publicly tried, and frequently anticipates too the fatal results of the trial. And although there are instances in which good men are exercised with heavy afflictions, and others in which bad men enjoy abundant prosperity, yet it is certain that, that which is good tends to good, and that which is evil tends to evil. "Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness;" "godliness is great gain;" "length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honor." A life of virtue and religion tends to health, wealth, and long life; while, on the other hand, vice and ungodliness as powerfully tend to disease, poverty, infamy, and death; and this wise distribution of things is a standing evidence of the justice of God.

4. But the most affecting display of divine justice was made in the sufferings and death of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Indeed, this was the chief design of the death of Christ. When all men had "sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" when they had dishonored his holy law by their disobedience,—in what way could the honor of God be restored? If justice alone take place, the sentence of death must be executed, and every transgressor receive the wages of his sin; but if mercy interpose, and spare the guilty, what becomes of the justice of God? Here divine wisdom steps in, and provides equally for the glory of justice and of mercy. "God so loved the world, that he gave"—"he spared not, his only-begotten Son;" "he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; our sins were made to meet upon him; and the Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all." And why was this done? St. Paul says, it was "to declare the righteousness or justice of God;" and thus to convince all the world that "he is just, while the justifier of him that believeth." Thus a just and holy God "condemned sin in the flesh" (of his own Son) "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in (or *for*) us."—See Isa. liii. 5; Rom. iii. 25; and viii. 3. On this ground, God will appear to be *just*, as well as merciful, in pardoning and justifying the believer in Jesus. On this ground it is said, concerning the penitent and believing sinner, "Save him from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." Job xxxiii. Grace is thus exalted to the highest degree, but not to the disparagement of justice; both are exalted together; as saith the apostle (Rom. iii. 24.) "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." If pardon for the chief of sinners could not be obtained, how would it appear that God is infinitely merciful? But if pardon were bestowed without any satisfaction for sin, how would it appear that God is infinitely just? But when God is pleased to punish sin in the person of his dear Son, and in consequence of the honor done to his law thereby, he is pleased to pardon and save the guilty: abundant provision appears to be made for the glory both of justice and mercy; and thus, "Grace reigns," but it "reigns *through righteousness*,"—through the justice of God in punishing sin, and the righteousness of Jesus Christ, the illustrious sufferer. Rom. v. 21.

On this foundation, the vilest sinners, the greatest offenders, being penitent, may hope for mercy; for "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and *just* to forgive us our sins;" not for the merit of repentance,

as some falsely conclude, but because "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin," as St. John saith (1 John i. 7, 9,) and as he affirms immediately after, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, J  sus Christ the Righteous." He further informs us on what grounds this powerful Advocate pleads for our pardon; this immediately follows: "He is the propitiation for our sins," ver. 2. He does not, therefore, sue for mere mercy: he pleads the price paid, the ransom laid down, the death endured; and the covenant, the promise, and the oath of the Father made with and to him, in behalf of all who were given to him, redeemed by him, and who apply to him for salvation. "All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." John vi. 37, and John xvii. 24.

Thus we have seen that God is infinitely just. Let us then "ascribe righteousness to our Maker." His ways may sometimes appear to be mysterious, but never let his justice be suspected. "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid!" "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Unquestionably. When he corrects his children, when he punishes his enemies, we ought to say, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints."

If God be just, we may certainly conclude that there will be a day of judgment. If God be just, "it shall be well with the righteous; it shall be ill with the wicked." If God be just, then "what a man sows, he shall certainly reap," and every man shall receive according to his works. If so, there must be a day of judgment—the day of "the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." At present, wicked men may escape punishment, for this is the day of God's patience, and our trial. But such are the irregularities of the present state of things, that there must needs be a day of settling, a day of retribution. Let not the daring offender flatter himself with impunity. If the young man "rejoice in his youth, and he walk in the ways of his heart, and in the sight of his eyes," let him know this—that "for all these things God will bring him into judgment." O! stand in awe, and sin not, for God will bring every work and thought into judgment, whether it be good or bad. If sinners would escape the punishment of

their sin, let them believe the Gospel, and take refuge in Christ. There is no safe approach to this just and Holy God, without a Mediator; but through him, who has glorified divine justice by his obedience to death, the greatest sinners may be accepted.

If God be glorious in his justice, it will be our honor to imitate him. "If we know that he is righteous, we know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him." If justice require us to give every one his due, let us study to be just both towards God and man. Let us "give unto C  sar the things that are C  sar's, and unto God the things that are God's." He who gives us all our powers, requires that we should give him our hearts. Yes; constrained by the mercies of God, let us present unto him our whole selves, body and soul, time, talents, and influence, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service.

Let us also be just to men. The great, the golden, the divine rule of conduct is, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even the same unto them." "Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor." God abhors dishonesty, deceit, and oppression; "false weights and measures are an abomination to the Lord;" but "to do justice and judgment is more acceptable to him than sacrifice." God rejected the fasts of the Jews, as solemn mockeries, because they did not "loose the bands of wickedness, and undo the heavy burdens, and let the oppressed go free." Nor would he accept of their offerings, "till judgment ran down like water, and righteousness as a mighty stream." In vain do tradesmen and workmen, masters and servants, profess a regard to the Gospel, unless they adorn the holy doctrine by a holy life; an eminent branch of which is, to act uprightly and conscientiously. Let no man then "go beyond and defraud his brother, because that the Lord is the avenger of all such."

Finally, let us *rely* on the justice of God. The justice of God is engaged on the behalf of believers, as well as his mercy. By the righteousness of Christ, justice is fully satisfied, and has no demands to make on the believer; and if we confess our sins, "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." He is pleased to bind himself by his own free promises, and will assuredly be just in fulfilling them. Hence, it is written, "God is not unrighteous to forget

your work of faith, and labor of love." He will do right. Much evil and injustice there now is, and always has been in the world. But every wrong, private, domestic, or public, will be called over in the great day. Then none will be thought too mean to engage his regard, none too great to escape his justice. Let this render the oppressed patient under their wrongs: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." "He will execute righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed." He will make "inquisition for blood."

Let the justice of God reconcile his people to all their afflictions. The King of Heaven can do no wrong; "the just Lord will do no iniquity." Are we punished or chastised? Let us say with holy Daniel, "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee; but unto us confusion of face: the Lord watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us; for the Lord our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth; for we obeyed not his voice." Dan. ix. 8. 14. He is "justified when he speaketh; he is clear when he judgeth."

From the justice of God, let his people expect a full accomplishment of all the gracious promises on which he has caused them to hope. "Verily there is a reward for the righteous;"—a reward of grace, not of debt. None shall be losers by him. If they "suffer for righteousness' sake; if men revile them, and persecute them, and say all manner of evil against them, falsely, for his sake, blessed are they; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." If they pray in secret, if they fast in private, if they give but a cup of cold water to a disciple of Christ, they shall in no wise lose their reward. Take courage, then, ye humble followers of Christ; be patient until the coming of our Lord; be not weary of well doing; fight the good fight; persevere in your course; keep the faith; for henceforth there is laid up for you a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give unto you at that day;" and then shall an assembled world be constrained to say, "He is the rock; his work is perfect; for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth, and without iniquity—*Just and right is he.*"

PRAYER.—RIGHTEOUS Father! Great and marvellous are all thy works; just and true are all thy ways. In all ages thou hast displayed thy justice. Rebel angels were excluded from Heaven; man was expelled from Paradise; the deluge destroyed the world of the ungodly; Sodom was destroyed by fire; thine ancient people were often sorely chastised for their back-

slidings; and to this day thy providence often proves that there is a God who judgeth on the earth. Above all, was thy awful justice displayed, when thy own Son was made an offering for sin; when thou didst condemn sin, in the person of our Surety, that the righteousness of the law, which we had broken, might be fulfilled for us, that so God might appear to the whole universe a just God, while a Savior. And now we would rejoice, holy Father, in thy gracious declaration, that if we confess our sins, thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Blessed God, enable us to imitate thy justice—may we render to all their dues; knowing that to do justice and judgment is more acceptable to thee than sacrifice; and may we humbly expect that, when we have finished our course, we shall receive that crown of righteousness which God, the righteous Judge, shall give unto all his people in the glorious day of his appearing.

SERMON LXXI.

THE OMNIPRESENCE* OF GOD.

Ps. cxxxix. 7. Whither shall I flee from thy presence?

WHEN the great and glorious God is the subject of our meditation, a holy awe should possess our minds like that which Moses felt when he approached the burning bush, which displayed a visible token of the divine presence: he was then commanded to take off his shoes as a mark of reverence, for the presence of God made the place itself holy. So when Abraham conversed with Jehovah in prayer, being deeply sensible of his own unworthiness, he cried out, "Behold! I who am dust and ashes, have taken upon me to speak to the Most High God!" Such thoughts as these should fill our hearts, when we attempt to display, with our feeble and polluted powers, the infinite perfections of the great Supreme.

That awful, sublime, and most useful truth, which now calls for our serious attention, is this,

THE GREAT GOD IS EVERYWHERE PRESENT.

This doctrine seems necessarily to result from our belief of a divine Being—at least of such a Being as deserves the title *Divine*; for to suppose him confined to

* As these Sermons are intended chiefly for plain people, the author admits a hard word unwillingly; but when the divine Perfections are the subject, it is difficult to avoid them entirely. It may be sufficient to say, that *Omnipresence* is unbounded presence, or a presence everywhere. In like manner, *Omnipotent* signifies Almighty—powerful without limit. *Omniscient* is infinitely wise, knowing every thing.

certain bounds and limits, is, in fact, to make him no God at all. Although some of the heathens said great things of their deities, yet in general their notions of them were low and trifling. They imagined that different gods presided over different countries; and, on some occasions, chained down their idols lest they should forsake them. Elijah, the prophet of Jehovah, rallied the disappointed worshippers of Baal; for, when they had cried from morning till noon, "O Baal, hear us!" and there was no answer, Elijah mocked them, and said, "Cry aloud, for he is a god," (so you profess to believe) but perhaps he is too busy to regard you—"he is talking, or pursuing, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep, and must be awaked." 1 Kings xviii. 27. But the glorious God, whom we adore, cannot thus be mocked; he is present everywhere; and especially "where two or three" are assembled for his worship. He is here.

That God is, and cannot but be, everywhere present, will evidently appear, if you consider,

1. *His Infinity;*
2. *His Universal Providence; and,*
3. *The Testimonies of Scripture.*

1. *God is infinite;* and therefore omnipresent. To be *infinite*, is to be *without bounds*, or limits; consequently, there are no limits to his presence. An infinite being cannot be contained in a finite space. It is the property of all *creatures* to be confined within certain bounds; and therefore we call them *finite*: but it is the property of the Creator to be unlimited, confined by no bounds; and therefore he is termed *infinite*. He is so in all his perfections: his knowledge is infinite; his power is infinite; his holiness is infinite, and so is his presence. "Whither then shall I flee from thy presence?"

Let us illustrate this great truth from the psalm before us; and especially from the verses which follow our text. "If I ascend up into *Heaven*, thou art there; if I make my bed in *Hell*, behold, thou art there: if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the *uttermost parts of the sea*; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the *darkness* shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me!" In vain then shall we try to shun his presence. Search the universe; explore all nature; but you shall find no place without God!

Search *Heaven*. Heaven is his throne, the seat of his glory; there he will certainly be found; for it is the happiness of *saints and angels* that they "always be-

hold his face." We know not the extent of the heavenly world; innumerable are its blessed inhabitants, but, "all the pure in heart see God;" nor can we suppose that any person who is so happy as to be admitted into that glorious state, can hide, or wish to hide, himself from his presence.

Or if, by the *heavens*, we understand the visible, the material heavens, that vast space in which we behold the sun, the sun, the moon, and the stars of light; extended as these are beyond the utmost powers of calculation or conception, there shall no spot, in all the vast domain, be found, in which God is not. The sun is said to be ninety-four millions of miles distant from the earth; and the fixed stars are thought to be many hundred thousand millions of miles distant. What immensity, what grandeur, what glory is here! God is here.

"If I make my bed in *Hell*" (Hebrew, *Sheol*.) If by *Hell* we understand the place of torment, where impenitent sinners are confined in chains of darkness, there, indeed, in a most awful sense, is God present!—present in the dreadful power of his incensed justice, inflicting the deserved punishment of sin; for amongst the myriads of those miserable creatures, there is not one who escapes his notice, or avoids his rod.

But the word *Hell* sometimes signifies the *invisible world*, the state of souls departed, whether in happiness or in misery. Of this state, as to the manner of their existence, mortals yet in the body know very little; it is to us the invisible, the unknown state: but it is not so to God. Jesus Christ is said (Rev. i. 18) to have "the keys of *Hell* and *Death*"—that is, of the invisible world, and of death, by which the spirits of men are separated from the body, and enter into the invisible world; consequently this state, and all the souls which are in it, are perfectly known to him; it is therefore impossible to avoid his presence there.

And thus, if we refer to the most distant parts of the sea and land, though far removed from the known and inhabited parts of the globe, in deserts and forests yet untrod by the foot of man, even there, everywhere, would God be present; and to make the foolish attempt of hiding from him, would be as vain as the effort of the refractory prophet Jonah was, "who fled from the presence of the Lord," in the land of Israel: but God followed him to the ocean, and by a dreadful storm, convinced him of his error, and taught him obedience.

This glorious perfection of God is intimately connected with another, equally essential to his being, that is, his *Omniscience* or *Universal Knowledge*. God's knowing all things, implies his being everywhere present. The imperfection of man is very obvious; his knowledge, like his presence, is confined to very narrow limits. His relations, his friends, it may be, are in a foreign country, and he is anxious to know their condition; but he must wait weeks and months before he can obtain it. His dearest friends are at a few miles distance; they sicken and die, and he knows it not. Distance deprives him of the knowledge of the event. He is confined to one place. But God beholds, at one glance, all the children of men in every place; all their actions, all their words, all their thoughts. Yea, saith He, "every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine." Yea, farther still: "he telleth the stars, he calleth them all by their names." "The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings." "There is not a word on our tongues, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether!" "No thought can be withholden from him." "He seeth wickedness." "He seeth in secret." "Hell and destruction are before the Lord;—how much more then the hearts of the children of men!" Surely, then, God is everywhere present. This will farther appear, if we refer to,

2. *His Universal Providence.*

We have already noticed his universal observation of men, their thoughts, their words, and their actions: but he is not a mere *spectator* of what passes in the world. Of that world he is the constant Supporter and Governor. He "upholds all things by the word of his power;" "by him all things consist," that is, they *stand together*, in the same harmonious order in which he first placed them. Nothing in the universe lives or moves, independent of him. The sun, the moon, the planets maintain their station, or move in their orbits, by his influence. The seasons revolve, summer and winter, spring-time and harvest, succeed each other at their appointed periods. The earth produces food for man; yea, the beasts of the field and the birds of the air, look to him for sustenance, and he giveth them their food in due season. The very sparrows are not beneath his notice, and the hairs of our head are all numbered.

He controls the affairs of empires and nations; the "hearts of kings are in his

hand, and he is Governor among the nations." He overrules even the policy, the pride, the ambition, and the avarice of wicked men, for the purposes of his own glory, and makes them the unwilling instruments of promoting the very objects which they wished to destroy.

But this *special providence* of God is exercised in behalf of his church: hence it is that God has committed the management of the whole world to Christ the Mediator. "Angels, principalities, and powers, are all subject to him; and he employs them for the benefit of his people. "All power," said he to his disciples, "in heaven and earth is mine; therefore go and preach the gospel to all nations;" and for your encouragement in that work, whatever difficulties you may encounter, whatever opposition you may meet with, remember this, "I am with you" (and will be with your successors in the Christian ministry) "always, even to the end of the world." It was the belief, and the sense, of the presence of Christ, that rendered the apostles and martyrs laborious and dauntless in their holy labors, and serene and joyful in prisons, and at the stake; it was this which made St. Paul rejoice that, when all men forsook him, when he appeared before Nero, "the Lord stood with him and strengthened him:" and this presence of the Lord (miraculously visible) animated Stephen, the first confessor, when he said to the Sanhedrim, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

If farther evidence be necessary to prove the universal presence of God, let us, in the last place, derive it from,

3. *The Testimonies of Scripture.*

Many of these have already been produced, in the two particulars already mentioned; a few more will strengthen the evidence.

It is expressly affirmed (Prov. xv. 3,) that "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good;" and again, in 2 Chron. xvi. 9, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." It must needs be so, if you consider that the divine inspection reaches even to the hearts of men, so that the most secret springs and movements of our minds, though unknown to our fellow-mortals, are fully exposed to his observation. Thus, when aged David transferred the kingdom to Solomon his son, he exhorted him "to serve the Lord with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind," enforcing

his exhortation with this solemn truth, "for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts." Happy would it have been for Solomon had he duly regarded this! Happy will it be for us if we habitually regard it!

When Jesus Christ dictated to St. John the seven epistles to the angels of the seven churches in Asia, he says to each of them, "I know thy works;" and he adds to one of them—"These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire; all the churches shall know that I am he who searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give to every one of you according to your works." Rev. ii. 23. The belief of this truth enabled Peter to appeal to his Master, when the question was thrice repeated, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Peter replied, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." In a word, "there is not any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." Heb. iv. 13.

The presence of God is, in a most gracious manner, granted to his church. The name of the church, as predicted by the prophet, was to be "*Jehovah Shammah*"—"The Lord is there." Of the temple at Jerusalem, the centre of the ancient church, God was pleased to say, "My heart and my eyes shall be there continually," denoting his most gracious presence, and parental affection; and we are sure that the church of Christ is not deserted by its glorious King. "Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name," said the Savior, "there am I in the midst of them." Matt. xviii. 20. None but an Omnipresent, and consequently a divine Person, could say this; and what an encouragement does this afford to public worship and social prayer! Jesus, the Son of God, is always present to assist, accept, and bless his pious friends!

But I imagine that I need not multiply Scripture testimonies to that point. The truth is sufficiently established. O that it were more generally regarded! Few deny the omnipresence of God! but alas! many forget it. It stands in need, therefore, not so much of proof, as of practical

IMPROVEMENT.

FROM hence we may learn how much there is of *Practical Atheism* in all wilful sin.

Surely Adam forgot himself, when he sought to be hidden "from the presence of the Lord God, among the trees of the gar-

den." Ah! how could he suppose that the thickest trees of Eden could conceal him from the sight of his Omniscient Maker? So soon did sin introduce guilt, and fear, and *folly*! And yet his posterity approve and imitate his conduct. They think, or seem to think, that they may sin without his observation. "The wicked hath said in his heart (if not with his tongue) God hath forgotten; he hideth his face; he will never see it;" but the Psalmist reproves the atheistical notion, and immediately adds, Thou *hast* seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand." Psalm x. 11. Why then do the workers of iniquity evade the light of day, court the shadows of night, shun the notice of fellow-mortals, and retire to secret places? The reason is, "they love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." "These are the people," said Job in old time, "who rebel against the light; they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof." On the contrary, "the eye of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me; and disguiseth his face." In like manner the housebreaker is described, "In the dark they dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the day-time; they know not the light; for the morning is to them even as the shadow of death: if any one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death." Job xxiv. 13, &c. Now, what practical Atheism is all this! What! do these *night-sinners* believe there is a God! What a God! A God, like a man, who is deceived by darkness? But such a God would be no God at all. "There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." Job xxxiv. 22. Let them observe what is said in this Psalm (ver. 11th) "If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee!" Wretched mortals, deceive yourselves no longer! Reflect a moment, and you will perceive your mistake. Why do you shun the eye of man? Are you afraid of him? And will you not be afraid of God? Will the presence of a child keep you from a wicked action? And will not the presence of God do it? Ah! sinner, even your "secret sins are placed in the light of his countenance;" and if not repented of, and pardoned, and forsaken, they will all be published before an assembled world at the day of judgment; for, "God will bring

every secret thing into judgment, whether it be good or bad." He will then "bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts." Then the book of God's remembrance, in which is recorded every sinful deed, shall be opened, and the dead shall be judged out of those things which are written in the book, according to their works." Eccles. xii. 14; 1 Cor. iv. 5; Rev. xx. 12. Cheat then your own souls no longer with the pretence of secrecy; and know that there is no house so privately situated, no time or place so unsuspected, no chamber so retired, no curtains so closely drawn as to hide the guilty deed from the all-seeing eyes of an ever-present God. You cannot deceive him; ah! why should you deceive yourself?

While this subject suggests matter of reproof, and even of terror, to guilty sinners, it may become a source of *consolation* to the sincere Christian. It affords comfort to him in his private retirements for devotion. He withdraws from the busy and the gay world, to converse with his Bible and his God in secret; and his Father, "who seeth in secret, shall reward him openly." So Jesus said to the devout Nathaniel, that "Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile—when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee:" he had retired probably to his garden, secluded from the eyes and ears of men, for the purpose of meditation and prayer; perhaps earnestly desiring to know whether Jesus were the true Messiah or not. There the eye of Christ beheld him; not the eye of his humanity, but of his divinity, from which the darkest shade affords no concealment. This discovery of Christ's knowledge fully convinced Nathaniel that Jesus was the Messiah. The omnipresent Savior still observes the closest religion of his people, though carefully concealed from the eye of the world, and he will, in the great day, reward it openly.

In deep affliction, it is a comfort to know that the Lord is at hand—"a very present help in the time of trouble." "Lover and friend," it may be, "are far away:" relations and physicians may be at a distance; but God is not far from us; and the language of his promise is, "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God, I will help thee." "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flames kindle upon thee." Animated by these most gracious declarations, the

Christian may boldly say, "God is my refuge and strength; therefore will I not fear though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me." These promises have been made good to believers, and they have found "joy and peace in believing." Christians, banished from their native country, have still enjoyed the presence of their God, which is confined to no particular spot. Shut up in loathsome dungeons, prisons have become palaces, for the King was there; and encircled with furious flames, the raging fire could not scorch them, for the son of God was present with them in the furnace.

Finally, Let us all take care habitually to recollect the presence of God. This will prove the most powerful check to our remaining corruptions, the most effectual shield against Satanic temptations, and the sharpest spur to holy duties. Remember that God is present. This is a rule in religion, of the greatest practical importance. In vain was Moses solicited by the luxuries of Pharaoh's court; in vain assaulted by the terrors of Pharaoh's anger: "he endured as seeing him who was invisible." When Satan tempts us to sinful actions, let it be recollected that "God seeth us;" "he knoweth the way that we take;" and let his presence prevail over the presence of the tempter. Are we called to perform difficult and laborious services? Weak as we are in ourselves, we can "do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth us." Why should we faint or fear, when, by his Spirit, "he worketh in us, both to will and to do." And in the performance of every duty, let the presence of God keep us close to our business. Bad servants are called in Scripture, "eye-servants," because they will not work unless their masters' eyes are upon them. Then, even idle servants will be industrious. We work, my friends, under the eye of our divine and gracious master. He is present with us at all times. Let us therefore "be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for we assuredly know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord:" and when that work is finished, he will say to each of us, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Then shall we know, in a far higher and happier manner, than we can now know, what the presence of the Lord means. Now "we see him through a glass darkly; then shall we see him face to face, and so shall we ever be with the Lord." "Comfort one

another, brethren, with these delightful words." The text will never more become a question, "Whither shall I flee from thy presence?"—for "in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Amen.

PRAYER.—ALL-SEEING God! we believe that thou art everywhere present, beholding the evil and the good. It is in vain to hide ourselves from thee, for there is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. Wherever we are, thou God seest us: we would, therefore, stand in awe of thee, and sin not.

Blessed God, it is the consolation of thy people that thou art ever with them. Thou beholdest us, whether in the church, or in the closet, or in the world. May it be our concern to approve ourselves to thee, that thou, who seest in secret, may reward us openly. We rejoice to think that in the hour of affliction, thine eye, the eye of a Father, beholds us, and that thou art a very present help in the time of trouble. Thou hast graciously said, When thou passest through the water, I will be with thee; and when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt. We desire therefore to take courage, humbly trusting that thou wilt never leave us nor forsake us. And, at the close of life, enable each of us, in faith, to say—Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. Hear these, our petitions, most merciful Father, for the sake of thy dear Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

SERMON LXXII.

THE PATIENCE OF GOD.

Romans ii. 4. Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

AMONG the various perfections of God, which render him infinitely worthy of our admiration and love, his *Patience* requires our peculiar regard, for there is not a human being upon earth who is not interested in it. God himself accounts it his glory to exercise patience towards the children of men, for when his servant Moses desired to see his glory, God was pleased to make a solemn proclamation of his name, including this amiable perfection, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, *long-suffering*, and abundant in goodness and truth." His patience is his glory; it is "a diadem belonging to the imperial crown of Heaven." He glories in it as peculiar to himself. "I will not," saith he, "execute the fierceness of my anger, for I am God, and not man;" as if he said, "Had I been man, the best and most patient man, I had destroyed them long ago; but as the heavens are above the earth, so

are my ways above the ways of man." And it is with a design to exalt the glory of this divine attribute, that St. Paul, in our text, speaks of "the *riches* of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering," together with the genuine tendency of these, which is "to lead the sinner to repentance," he bears with thee, that thou mayest prevent the dreadful blow, by humbling thyself before him, and forsaking thy sins. From these words we shall take occasion to show, that

The great, holy, and just God, exercises most astonishing patience towards his sinful creatures.

Patience, forbearance, long-suffering, suppose the commission of offences. If God does not speedily punish the sins of men, it is not because he is not displeased with them. This indeed was the mistake of the Jews, to whom St. Paul speaks in our text. The goodness of God to them, made some of them think, that he would not punish the children of Abraham for their sins; but the apostle tells them, that they formed a wrong judgment of God, whose patience was not intended to lull them asleep in security, but to give them time, and space, and motive to repentance. If God does not at once execute his judgments on wicked transgressors, it is not because he does not notice them, and hate them, and determine to punish them. He who is infinitely holy, hates sin with a perfect abhorrence, of which he has given the world sufficient evidence in the numerous calamities which everywhere abound, in consequence of sin. The earth was cursed for man's sake; it produces thorns and thistles; cares, labors, and troubles; sickness, sorrow, and death; to remind the children of Adam, that they have sinned, and that he is displeased.

The great God, seated on his eternal throne, beholds every individual of all the millions of mankind, and none of their actions can be concealed from his notice. He knows our "down-sitting and our up-rising; he compasseth our path, and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our ways:" and O, what a world of iniquity does he behold!—"the whole world," saith St. John, "lieth in wickedness"—"a rebel universe!—our species up in arms, not one exempt!" The Scripture testifies, that "all are under sin; that there is none righteous, no, not one:" that so, "every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." Rom. iii. 10, &c. And, if every one be a sinner, if God beholds innumerable sins in every one of us, what must be the collected sum

of a thousand millions of sinners who inhabit the earth!—and who can calculate the amount of sins repeated throughout the life of each transgressor, continued (in the case of many) for fifty years or more? God hears every oath that sinners utter: he hears thousands of these every moment. He observes all the lascivious glances of the eye, he follows the lewd and filthy sinner into the most secret chamber: he witnesses all the acts of fraud, and cruelty, and oppression, which are daily committed: and he beholds all these; not with indifference, but with infinite abhorrence, for “he is angry with the wicked every day.” “I know,” saith he, “your manifold transgressions, and your mighty sins” (Amos v. 12;) and, in another place (Ezek. xi. 5,) he says, “I know the things that come into your mind, every one of them.” What provoking acts of iniquity does he behold in courts, in senates, in ships, and play-houses, in taverns, and in brothels; yea, in churches too, where too often, formality, wandering eyes and wandering hearts, hypocrisy, and unbelief, sins most hateful in his eyes, are to be found! All these things are noticed in order that they may be punished; they are recorded in his book of remembrance, and will be brought into judgment in the great day of accounts.

Let it not be supposed that God is not displeased, because he does not yet punish. Not only do the evils which abound in the world, manifest his anger against sin, but the testimonies of his word most fully and strongly declare it. Hear what he said to Israel in old time (Ps. lxxviii. 40.) “How oft did they provoke me in the wilderness, and grieve me in the desert!”—“forty years long was I grieved with this generation;” and in another passage (Amos ii. 13,) “Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves;” and in another text, more strongly expressive of the divine hatred of sin than any other in the Bible (Genesis vi. 5, 6.) “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually; and it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.” These expressions, which are after the manner of men, must not be taken as if they implied any weakness or unhappiness in God; but they certainly prove that he is greatly displeased with sin, and especially with atrocious sinners; even as a parent, who is not only displeased at the disobedience and ingratitude of a son, but is also exceedingly

grieved, grieved at his heart. Surely this should teach us to grieve for our own sins! But if such be the just resentment which a holy God feels when sinners rebel, how wonderful is his patience in delaying the deserved punishment! This is what we are called in our text to admire—“the riches of his gentleness, and forbearance, and long-suffering.”

That we may more clearly discern, and be more deeply affected with the patience of God, let us review some of those instances which are recorded in the sacred Scriptures, or which are still manifested in the world, and in ourselves.

1. God was pleased to give a specimen of his patience in his conduct towards the first human sinners—our first parents.

The great Creator had been liberal to his creature, man. He was filled and surrounded with good; there was nothing left him to wish for. He had all the liberty he could desire. There was no restraint laid upon him, save an easy abstinence from the forbidden tree; to enforce which his Maker had declared that disobedience should be punished by death. But, ah! too soon did he yield to the force of temptation; he saw, he took, he ate the fatal fruit. Soon did horror seize his soul, when his offended Maker approached, and approached, as he had reason to expect, to execute the dreadful threatening; for he had said, “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” But *did* he die? Did the thunderbolts of divine wrath strike him dead as he stood trembling in the thicket? No. Patience descends, for the first time, to this guilty world (which she has never since forsaken,) and gives the condemned criminal a reprieve, a reprieve for 900 years. The sentence of death indeed was past, “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return;” but it was many centuries before it was executed; it was also accompanied with an intimation of redeeming mercy, by which, on believing, the worst part of the sentence should be remitted, for he was not to taste “the second death.” What a living monument of patience did our venerable first father exhibit to all his numerous posterity, for almost a thousand years; every one of his pious descendants who beheld him would say, Behold the patience of God! The same patience was exercised towards the first-born man, who, sad to think, proved a murderer, a murderer of his brother, a murderer of his pious brother; and who had no other provocation to the horrid deed than the piety of his brother and his own wickedness. And might

it not have been expected, that in answer to the cry of Abel's blood, vengeance should have struck the bloody Cain to the earth, and to hell? But here again behold the patience of God; he received an awful sentence, and became a fugitive and a vagabond, but he was allowed a season for repentance, and his life was secured by a special provision. Gen. iv. 9—15.

2. Advancing in the history of the world, we find that in less than 1400 years, "the earth was corrupt before God; the earth was filled with violence; for all flesh had corrupted his way." The offended God determines to destroy the earth and its guilty inhabitants. "Behold I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under Heaven." But was this awful sentence immediately executed? No: "his days shall be a hundred and twenty years." Noah, who was himself to be preserved in the ark which he undertook to build, became a preacher of righteousness to his neighbors, that they also might repent, and escape the threatened punishment. On that disobedient race "the long-suffering of God once waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing." 1 Pet. iii. 20. Every stroke of the hammer, while that vessel was building, was a warning from God, and a fruit of his patience. How many, during that 120 years, repented and were pardoned, we are not informed—we hope there were many, but they died in peace before the flood came: of those who were living on earth at the time, none were preserved from the waters but Noah and his family. O how little was the patience of God improved by that generation!

3. Observe the patience of God towards the idolatrous nations of the heathen world. Most hateful to God is the sin of idolatry. It is defrauding him of his glory; it is serving the creature instead of the Creator; it is transferring the honor due to the most high God to dead men, to images of men, to birds, and brutes, and reptiles, yea, to devils; but idolatry was not their only crime; their morals were as depraved as their worship was false; the greater part of them were "filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; haters of God, disobedient to parents, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." This was their character. Yet, having sufficient light to know that these things were worthy of death, they persisted in the practice of them, and took pleasure in others who did

them. Many, even of their lawgivers, priests, and philosophers, by their institutions, examples, and presence, encouraged the people in the practice of these abominations, especially in celebrating the festivals of their gods. Most justly might the holy Governor of the world make a dreadful example of such egregious sinners, but he was patient and long-suffering; "the times of this ignorance God winked at." Acts xvii. 30. He so overlooked as not severely to punish. Great was his patience!

4. The history of the Jews affords most striking proofs of divine forbearance. No nation upon earth was ever so highly favored. For no other people did God so miraculously interpose: no country was ever indulged with so full a revelation of his will, with such tokens of his presence; to them, therefore, he might justly say, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish *you* for all your iniquities." Those iniquities were indeed numerous and aggravated; they are charged with being "stiff-necked and rebellious," and they frequently fell into idolatry; to which crimes they added the persecution and murder of the prophets; yet he endured, with much long-suffering, their ungrateful conduct. Forty years he endured their manners in the wilderness. It was long before he cast off the ten tribes of Israel; and before he sent Judah to Babylon. He restored them again to their own land, rebuilt their temple, and gave them another trial. They did not after this relapse into idolatry; but they lost the spirit of their religion, became formal, and hypocritical, and worldly, and substituted the traditions of men in the place of the word of God; still his patience was prolonged, and to them he made the first offer of the Gospel; nor did he "destroy their place and nation" till they had rejected both his Son and the apostles, and then wrath came upon them to the uttermost.

5. The patience of God appears in his giving warning of approaching judgments. Thus, by Noah, he warned the old world; thus, by Jonah, he warned Nineveh; thus, by the prophets, was Israel warned, when captivity or war was at hand; and thus, our Lord himself warned Jerusalem and the Jews of their impending fate. In this manner he commanded his people to act in the conquest of Canaan; they were to summon a city before they attacked it; and in this manner he proceeds towards all his rebellious creatures. This was a principal branch of the prophet's office in

ancient days, as expressed in the book of Ezekiel (ch. iii. 17.) "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand." Awful admonition! but strong demonstration of the patience of God! In the same manner his long-suffering is still displayed. The faithful ministers of the New Testament, no less than those of the Old, are still his watchmen. Bear with them, ye who hate not your own souls; do not be angry with them, because they tell you the truth, nor reproach them as ministers of wrath, when they warn you to flee from the wrath to come. They are your best friends; they only act according to their commission, and they imitate the apostle of the Gentiles, whose joy it was that he could appeal to Heaven, that "he had not shunned to declare" to the Ephesians "the whole counsel of God," and that for three whole years he had "not ceased to warn every one of them, night and day, with tears." O consider these faithful warnings as tokens of the divine patience!

6. Once more, observe and admire the patience of God, in the reluctance with which he punishes men, and in the moderation with which punishments are inflicted. His judgments are long delayed, as long as possible. He strikes not till it be absolutely necessary. He convinces the world that "judgment is his strange work," and that he "doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." Like a tender parent, necessity only urges him to chastise, and his language is, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." Hos. iii. 8. And when he does punish, with what moderation is it done! "He stirs not up all his wrath." If he send into a country the famine, the plague, or the sword, all are not destroyed; some are spared, perhaps the greater part. At the worst of times it may be said, "He hath punished less than our iniquities have deserved," and "in the midst of judgment he remembers mercy."

tion to those practical lessons which the subject suggests.

1. *Let us take care that we do not abuse the patience of God.* This is a common and often a fatal fault. Because God is patient, sinners presume that he is unconcerned about their sins. Because he delays to punish, they conclude he never will. But this is to abuse his patience, and deny his veracity. Of this he complained in ancient times (Ps. l. 21.) "Because I kept silence, thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself;" but this vile abuse of his patience is so provoking to him, that he adds, "Consider this, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." Wretched infatuation! Ungrateful treatment! Do ye thus requite the patience of God? Do ye thus despise—put a wrong construction on his long forbearance? If so, mark the consequence, as declared in the verse after our text—"Thou treasurest up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." For, observe, his patience will have an end. This perfection will not, like most others, be continued to eternity. It is adapted only to the present time, and may end to-morrow, it may end to-night, yea, the next moment. Jesus Christ, foreseeing that the forbearance of God with Jerusalem was near a close, anticipates the dreadful day, and weeps when he cries, "O that thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes." Sad it is to think, that the goodness which leads to repentance, should only serve to harden the heart, and embolden the sinner to persist in his sins. "Because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." Eccles. viii. 11. But, ah! what will be the consequence? The stroke delayed will fall the heavier; the stream impeded in its course, will increase its weight, and when once it breaks down the dam, will rush with such violence as to carry all before it: the debt that remains long unpaid, will be demanded with interest upon interest, and that terrific threatening will be fulfilled (Prov. i. 24, &c.) "Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded, I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as a desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind." To avoid this dreadful doom,

We conclude with directing your atten-

2. *Let us be concerned to improve his patience*; and our text directs us how to do it; “the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance;” it gives opportunity for it; and it has a tendency to produce it. God might have cut you down in the first of those sinful actions which perhaps you have repeated hundreds of times. Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead in the act of lying, and so have many others been when uttering horrid imprecations. Zimri and Cosbi were slain when committing lewdness. Many have died in fits of drunkenness; and many persecutors have been snatched away before they could execute their wicked purposes, or soon after committing them. Why are we spared? Why more forbearance of us than others? It may be (O that it may!) that God designs to melt our stubborn hearts by his kindness. Delay then no longer. Lift up your heart with me and say, God be merciful to me a sinner! I yield, O Lord, at length. I admire thy long-suffering. I will tempt it no longer. O pardon my iniquity, for it is great. Wash me in the blood of the Lamb, and let thy good Spirit cleanse this foul heart, and make it new.

With what grateful admiration should believers reflect on the days that are past! The weeks, the months, the years when God “waited to be gracious.” Long did he stand at the door and knock, before it was opened; and in the mean time, how many a neighbor, a friend, a companion perhaps of iniquity, was snatched away—they were taken, but you were left; left till you heard the voice of the Son of God, and lived. O ’t is a heart-melting consideration, that God should spare you, as a man spareth his son, till he brought you up out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, ~~set~~ your feet upon a rock, and established your goings. O to grace what a debtor are you! Will you not henceforth sing his praise, admire his patience, and devote yourself to his service? How reasonable is it also that you should,

3. *Resemble the God of Patience*. We cannot have the same occasion for patience as he has, for we are not the rulers of the world; yet some occasion for it we shall certainly find. Some injuries from our fellow-creatures we must expect; some degree of opposition even for Christ’s sake. But the patience of God must make us patient. Good men have sometimes failed here. Even Moses, meek as he was, was so offended by the stubborn Israelites, that he angrily called them Rebels. How unlike to God are those persons who are all in a flame at the slightest provocation, and

meditate revenge under the pretence of a regard to honor. Even Christians themselves, in their families and in their churches, discover too little of this amiable and God-like grace: but true Christian love “suffereth long and is kind; beareth all things, and is not easily provoked.” O let the patience of God engage you to possess your souls in patience! Remember the instructive parable, in which our Lord reproves the cruel creditor, whose immense debt of ten thousand talents had been freely forgiven, but who went out and seized by the throat his fellow-servant, who owed him only a hundred pence. How ungrateful, how inconsistent, how provoking was his conduct! Let us, however, “forbear one another in love, and forgive one another, even as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven us.”

PRAYER.—O LORD our God, thou art indeed merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth; we adore the riches of thy patience and forbearance. The whole world lieth in wickedness, and thou knowest that the sinfulness of man is great in the earth; and although thou art angry with the wicked every day, and hast declared, that except men repent they shall certainly perish, yet thou art slow to anger; thou givest men many kind warnings, and allowest much time and space for repentance. And instead of dealing with us according to our sins, thou art constantly following us with goodness and mercy. O that thy goodness may lead us to repentance! Suffer none of us to abuse thy patience, and so treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, but may our hearts be melted by thy kindness, so that we may seek and obtain both thy pardoning mercy and renewing grace. And O that those who have obtained mercy, may show mercy to others; possess their own souls in patience; forbearing one another in love, and forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ’s sake, hath forgiven them.

SERMON LXXIII.

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

Psalm cxv. 3. But our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.

THE sovereignty of God is a sublime and difficult subject, yet very important and useful. Some of the divine perfections may, perhaps, appear to our selfish minds more amiable and attractive; but there is none in which our obedience and submission to him are more deeply concerned. Some of his attributes may seem more clearly to invite our confidence, and engage our affection; but as creatures in a state of subjection and trial, we are peculiarly interested in the divine sove-

reignty. It is necessary that we should be well established in this doctrine, that we may with sincerity pray, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven;" and that in the hour of adversity we may be able to say—"It is the Lord, let him do as seemeth him good."

Sovereignty signifies, in general, Supremacy—the possession of supreme power—a right to govern without the control of another; or, as in our text, power to act as one pleases. This right is here ascribed to God, and can belong to no other in the same sense or degree. Puny mortals, conquerors, and tyrants, have frequently assumed this right, and have exercised it over a small portion of this little globe, and over a few millions of their fellow-mortals; and history has awfully shown how unfit man is to be intrusted with sovereignty unrestrained; for great men are too often the subjects of an infernal sovereign, and slaves of their own bad passions; they are proud, ambitious, cruel, selfish, and misinformed: therefore, the common sense and common interest of mankind have led some to restrain human sovereignty within reasonable bounds; but the great, holy, and blessed God is incapable of any of these evils, and is perfectly qualified to exercise unlimited sovereignty over the whole universe, whatever worlds and beings it may contain, known or unknown to us.

Our present business shall be to establish and improve this great scriptural doctrine, that *the glorious God has a right to exercise dominion over all his creatures, and to do, in all respects, as he pleases.*

This right naturally results from his being the *Former* and the *Possessor* of heaven and earth. Who can dispute his right? He made all things; he supports all things; and is it not fit that he should govern all things? "For his pleasure they are, and were created;"—may he then not do with them as he pleases? especially when we consider that

He is infinitely wise. He perfectly knows all his creatures, all their actions, and all their tendencies. He is acquainted with the great plan which his own infinite mind projected before the beginning of time, and of which the wisest men know nothing, but "that he hath made all things for himself, to show forth his own glory." As little children, however acute, cannot comprehend the movements of a large machine, or the operations of a manufactory, or the affairs of government, so we short-sighted mortals, whatever be our attainments, are

unqualified to judge of the management of the universe; but we know that he is wise, and should rejoice to think that "the Lord reigneth."

He is also *infinitely righteous*. His sovereign rule is not that of a haughty tyrant; but of a most righteous and holy Governor. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Yes; he cannot do wrong. His ways may be, to our apprehension, mysterious: his paths may be "in the sea, and his footsteps in the mighty waters," so that we may not be able to trace him: "clouds and darkness may be round about him," so that we may not clearly discern him: but justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne." It is the pride of man that arraigns the divine procedure at the bar of his reason, and concludes that this is right, and that is wrong, according as it agrees or disagrees with human notions and practices. God's ways and thoughts may differ widely from ours, but they are all right. "Just and true are all thy ways, O King of Saints."

He is also infinitely good. We may not always be able to discern the goodness of God. In particular instances, his dealings with men may seem severe; but we are bound to believe from the essential goodness of his nature, that none of his actions are inconsistent with it. In human affairs, the imprisonment or execution of a criminal may appear to an ignorant spectator a cruel action; but the intelligent observer knows that the general good of society is promoted by the punishment of evil-doers. A child can hardly be prevailed upon to swallow a nauseous medicine, however necessary; but an adult person receives it as a benefit, calculated to restore his health and preserve his life; he will even submit to the amputation of a limb for the same purpose. Probably, those things in the course of Providence which seem the most severe, are equally necessary; and the destruction of whole cities or nations may be so, for aught we can tell: at least we may, with great propriety, say of God—

"Good when he gives, supremely good,
Nor less when he denies;
E'en crosses, from his sovereign hand,
Are blessings in disguise."

That the blessed God is not only perfectly qualified to exercise a sovereign rule over the universe, but that he actually does exercise it, has always done so, and will do so to the end of time, is absolutely certain and undeniable, and is uniformly

asserted in the Scriptures of truth. It is unnecessary to stop here, in order to produce formal proof; it will be sufficiently evident while we point out some of the distinct instances of his sovereignty:—In the creation of the world—in the fall of man—in the method appointed for his recovery—in the application of redemption to sinners—and all the temporal concerns of men, prosperous or adverse.

1. Observe the sovereignty of God in the creation of the world.

Why was this world made at all? Why made just when it was? Why made *as* it was? Why not made many ages before? Why organized as it is? a sun in the centre?—several planets (how many!) revolving about it?—the earth in her present orbit?—the moon attending her?—why other planets nearer the sun—others more remote? Why was this globe inhabited? and by such a creature as man, so like other beings in some respects, so unlike them in others? A thousand such questions might be asked. One answer suffices for them all—“For thy pleasure they are and were created.” Other reasons we know not, nor is any other necessary.

2. The sovereignty of God may be noticed in the awful event of man’s apostasy.

Before the fall, his Maker entered into a covenant with him, not for himself alone, but for all his posterity in and with him, as their head and representative. If he should fulfil the condition of that covenant, abstaining from the forbidden tree as the pledge of his obedience, all his posterity would be confirmed in the same state of happiness, and in the divine favor; if he transgressed, all his posterity would be involved in the consequences of that transgression; and become liable to the same condemnation and misery with himself. Could all the posterity of Adam have been consulted, it is probable, that all would readily have consented to this arrangement; but whether they would have approved or not, or whether men now approve or disapprove of this constitution of things, is of no manner of consequence. So God determined; and doubtless he determined rightly. He gave Adam sufficient power to maintain his integrity; but he left him free to fall. So his sovereignty appointed. Left to himself, he who could have stood, did fall, and by that fall

“Brought death into the world, and all our woe!”

3. The sovereignty of God is displayed in the method he has been pleased to appoint for the recovery of fallen man.

There was rebellion in heaven, as well

as on earth. Angels rebelled, and were expelled from Heaven—not *all* indeed; and why not all? The sovereign goodness of God preserved the “elect angels” (1 Tim. *v.* 21,) from falling; the rest “are reserved in chains of darkness to the judgment of the great day.” But man, apostate man, became the object of divine compassion; and no sooner did he need a Savior, than a Savior was promised—a Savior who should assume the nature that had sinned, and restore the offender and his (believing) posterity to a better paradise than Adam lost. But why not include angels? They were beings superior to man. Divine sovereignty passed them by; “for verily he (the Redeemer) took not upon him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham”—“he took flesh and blood, that he might die, and by dying, make reconciliation for the sins of the people.” Heb. ii. 17, &c.

That this method of reconciliation should be fixed upon, we ascribe to the divine sovereignty. That he should save any of the fallen race—that his Son should be the Savior—that in order to his being a Savior he should be incarnate—be born of a virgin—be born where and when he was—be a poor man, and a man of sorrows—should speak, and act as never man did, yet be treated as never man was; and that he who was to give life to the world, should himself die—die a violent death—die on the infamous cross, and that his so dying should be considered and accepted by a holy and just God as a sacrifice, satisfaction, and atonement for sin—that his blood should cleanse from all sin: and that, through faith in his blood, all sinners who believe should be freely, fully, and for ever justified, and entitled to everlasting life.—Such was the divine constitution; so God appointed in his sovereign pleasure; and therefore we conclude that this method of salvation is right and good, excellent and glorious, every way worthy of its divine Author, who will be eternally glorified by the whole intelligent universe for adopting it.

4. The sovereignty of God is no less displayed in the application, than in the provision of this great salvation.

The glorious gospel, which is “the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth,” is sent to one place and not to another. He has indeed authorized his disciples to proclaim his Gospel “to every nation”—“to every creature:”—and no small share of blame, it may be feared, attaches to the church, and especially to the ministers of it, that greater efforts

have not been made in obedience to that authority: yet we cannot deny the exercise of divine sovereignty, in the unequal distribution of Gospel light. In the days of the apostles, Macedonia was preferred to Bithynia; and doubtless the providence of God directed the steps of the first Evangelists and of successive Missionaries. Some nations of the world are far more highly favored than others. Many populous regions of Asia are destitute of a gleam of light, and others enjoy but a very small portion of it. Almost the whole of Africa lies in midnight darkness; and the vast continent of America knew nothing of the Gospel till within a few centuries. Of all countries, ours has the greatest cause for joy and gratitude. Here, surely, the sovereign goodness of God will be gladly acknowledged—"He hath not dealt so with every land, praise ye the Lord."

And will not every individual, who has "tasted that the Lord is gracious," ascribe all the light, the faith, the love, the hope that he enjoys to the sovereignty of God? That he was pleased to send his Gospel to the place of your abode (while others are passed by;) that he should so order the circumstances of time and place, that you should be brought to hear the joyful sound; and above all, that the eyes of your understanding should be enlightened, your heart softened and humbled, the Savior revealed in you the hope of glory, and you enabled, perhaps, in the face of contempt and opposition, to own his cause and follow him fully; while probably those who heard the same sermons, and were placed in the same circumstances with you, remain in their natural state, and, like Gallio, "care for none of these things," but despise and hate them, and speak all manner of evil of them and of you.—Now, to what will you ascribe the difference? Who maketh thee to differ from another? Was it your own superior wisdom and goodness? No; you will certainly say, "By the grace of God I am what I am; that grace was freely bestowed, and might justly have been withheld. Not unto me, O Lord; not unto me, but to thy name be the praise and glory of the saving change. Such was the language of our adorable Lord when on earth, when the seventy disciples reported to him the success of their ministry. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Luke x. 21.

The sovereignty of God our Savior is

apparent in the constitution and ordinances of his church. He has appointed what officers should dispense his word, and superintend its concerns. He has appointed the first day of the week instead of the seventh, to be the Christian Sabbath, for he is "Lord of the Sabbath." He has ordained the preaching of his word, prayer, and praise, to be the stated branches of public worship. He has appointed Sacraments, or external representations of spiritual blessings, and he has confined these to two in number, Baptism and the Lord's Supper; the first of these to be the badge of discipleship, showing, by the use of water, that his religion was intended for the purification of all his people; and by the bread and wine in the latter, that Christ crucified, whose death we therein remember and exhibit, is the food and support of every believer. That Christ thus appointed the ordinances of his worship in the church, is a high instance of his sovereignty, and every Christian is in duty and in love bound to submit to all his appointments.

5. The sovereignty of God is obvious in his disposal of the temporal affairs of men, whether as *individuals* or as *nations*.

As *individuals*.—Our parentage, the circumstances of our birth, the place, the time, all are arranged by the great Ruler. The powers, we possess, of body and of mind; the degree of education we receive, and on which, frequently, so much, in after life, depends; the culture or the neglect of the mind; the connexions which we form, apparently the result, not so much of choice, as of what we call Accident, are all under the direction of Heaven; and so are all our concerns, whether we enjoy uninterrupted health and good spirits, or whether we drag on heavily, with a sick body and a feeble mind; whether we forsake the land of the living at twenty years of age, or are detained in it to seventy or eighty, depends on the divine pleasure, for Jesus hath "the keys of death and of the invisible world." In like manner, his sovereign pleasure allots the bounds of our habitations; the nature of our employment, in a superior or inferior station; and the degree of prosperity or failure, that shall crown our labors or disappoint our hopes. Every prudent and laborious tradesman is not always successful; "the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." "Promotion," says the wisest of men, "cometh not from the East, nor from the West, nor from the South." Events, that contradict all probabilities, often take place, to show man his dependence on a superior power; for sometimes, as we read

in Hannah's song, (1 Sam. ii. 8.) "He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory; for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them."

The sovereignty of God should particularly be owned by the afflicted and distressed, who form a large proportion of human beings, man being "born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward." It is of great importance to know and remember, what was wisely observed to patient Job, that "affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground;" that is to say, afflictions are not the effect of chance, they are in the hand of God; and therefore it is added as a piece of advice to Job,—*"I would seek unto God, and unto God I would commit my cause."*—I would submit to his rod, and seek relief from him. Even those events which seem to us *casual*, and, as to agents concerned in them, undesigned, are under the direction of heaven; so it appears from Exodus xxi. 12, 13, "He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death: but if a man lie not in wait, but *God deliver him into his hand*, then I will appoint thee a place whither he shall flee," that is, to the city of Refuge. This proves that nothing comes *by chance*, but the most casual events are under the control of divine sovereignty.

To the wicked, afflictions are intimations of God's holy displeasure against their sins, and solemn warnings to fly from the wrath to come; but to the children of God they are parental chastisements, the effects of tender love, and wisely directed for their good. The sovereign hand of the Almighty should be owned in both.

That sovereign hand is, perhaps, more visible in the affairs of nations; they rise and fall, flourish and decay, and the connexion between natural causes and effects may sometimes be plainly discerned; yet that the Ruler of the world directs and controls them is sufficiently evident, for in his hand are both the causes and the effects. This might be fully illustrated from the history of Israel, and other nations connected with them, from their first rise in the family of Abraham, to their dispersion: a great part of the Old Testament might be adduced for this purpose, but time forbids. God was pleased himself to illustrate this before the eyes of Jeremiah, by the emblem of a potter, who, with the utmost ease, formed a vessel of the yielding clay, and as easily broke it, and formed it

again into another vessel, "as seemed good to the potter to make it." "Cannot I do with you, O house of Israel, saith the Lord, as this potter?"—destroy a nation, or erect an empire? Jer. xviii. 6. The craft, the envy, the revenge, the ambition of men are often the occasions of wars, and fightings, and revolutions; the agents may be wicked men, but frequently they are the mere instruments of a holy and just God, in punishing an individual or a nation, ripe for ruin. The agent may be wicked, but God is righteous. "With him," said the wise and pious Job, "with him is strength and wisdom: the deceiver and the deceived are his. He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools. He looseth the bands of kings, or girdeth their loins with a girdle. He increaseth the nations and destroyeth them," &c. Job xii. 16, &c. In this manner God displays, in every age, his sovereign dominion over the nations,—his management of the children of men, crossing their purposes, overruling their counsels, overpowering their efforts, and overcoming their opposition: and proving, to their confusion, that "in the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them." Exod. xviii. 11. And in nothing is this, his sovereign power, more conspicuous, than in producing great and good events from the evil actions of his creatures, as in the case of Joseph, whose glory in Egypt was the result of the envy and cruelty of his brethren, and of the lewdness and lies of Potiphar's wife. Their actions and intentions were bad, "but God meant them for good." The Sabeans and the Chaldeans pillaged Job, but the glory of God, as well as Job's greater prosperity, was ultimately promoted. Pharaoh, king of Egypt, was a tyrannical oppressor of the children of Israel, who could proudly say, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?" but to him God says, "In very deed, for this cause have I raised thee up, for to show in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." Exod. ix. 16. In a word, the greatest and most glorious event that ever took place in our world, the atoning death of Immanuel, was effected by instruments the most base and vile. It was by the "wicked hands" of the Jews, that Jesus "was crucified and slain;" but we are assured by St. Peter, that even this was according to "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." The holy God is not the author, or abettor of the sins of men; it is impossible that he can concur in the moral evil of any human action; but we see that, in the ex-

ercise of his sovereign rule, he not only permits wicked men to perform bad actions, but by his infinite wisdom and power brings good out of evil. The sinner is condemned, but God is righteous.

The doctrine of God's sovereignty shows us, that *ready obedience to all his precepts* is our reasonable service. Is God the rightful Governor of the world?—are we his natural subjects?—has he made known his holy will to us?—and shall we not cheerfully obey him? As our *Creator*, we ought to obey him;—as our *Preserver*, we ought to obey him; and especially as our *Redeemer*, we ought to obey him. “I am the Lord thy God, who have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage,” said Jehovah to Israel; and then he proceeds to lay down his law for their conduct—“Thou shalt have no other gods before me,” &c. Exod. xx. 2, 3. In like manner he speaks to us in the Gospel, not from Sinai, but from Sion, “Because I am the Lord, and your God, and Redeemer, therefore are ye bound to keep all my commandments.”

The great lesson enforced by this doctrine is, *Humble submission to all his righteous pleasure*. Is God the Sovereign of the world, infinitely wise, righteous, and good? Has he an undoubted right to do as he will with all his creatures? Then surely he has a right to do as he pleases with *me*. He is too wise to err; too good to be unkind. I welcome all his sovereign will, for all that will is love. He says to me, in this painful, or in that bereaving providence, “Be still, and know that I am God;” and my submissive temper shall yield obedience. I will adopt the praiseworthy language of the most patient of men, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” He will permit his suffering child to plead, as his only-begotten Son once did in his agony, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;” but I hope he will strengthen me to add, with profound submission, “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.” Amen.

PRAYER.—O THOU great Supreme! thou art the Former and the Possessor of Heaven and of Earth: infinitely wise, infinitely righteous, infinitely good! Thou art the sovereign Ruler of the world, and hast a right to dispose of all creatures and things according to thy good pleasure. Thou art the Judge of all the Earth, and always doest that which is right. Teach us, O Lord, humbly to submit to thy holy will in all thy dispensations, even when they are the most afflictive. In every trouble may we be still, and know that thou art God. Make us content to receive not good only at thy sovereign hand, but evil also;

and to say, when deprived of what we love and value, The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord. And O that we may entertain the most grateful thoughts of thy undeserved goodness, and especially of thy grace. We bless thee, that to us is the word of salvation sent, while millions remain destitute of it; and if thou hast also given us thy Holy Spirit, and caused us to taste that thou art gracious, we ascribe it to thy sovereign and distinguishing mercy. Not unto us, Lord, not unto us, but to thy name, be glory, now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON LXXIV.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

Psalm xxxiii. 5. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord.

IN discoursing on the glorious perfections of God, his *goodness* must by no means be omitted; for though all his perfections are his glory, yet this is particularly so called; for when Moses, the man of God, earnestly desired to behold a grand display of the *glory of Jehovah*, the Lord said, in answer to his petition, “I will cause all my *goodness* to pass before thee;” thus intimating, that He himself accounted his goodness to be his glory, (Exod. xxxiv. 6;) and it includes that mercy, grace, long-suffering, and truth, which are afterwards mentioned. When it relieves the miserable, it is *mercy*; when it bestows favors on the worthless, it is *grace*; when it bears with provoking rebels, it is *long-suffering*; when it confers promised blessings, it is *truth*; when it supplies indigent beings, it is *bounty*; and this is the principal view we shall now take of it. The *goodness of God* is a very comprehensive term; it includes all the forms of his kindness shown to men, whether considered as creatures, as sinners, or as believers: but I purpose to consider the goodness, mercy, and love of God distinctly. All might, indeed, be comprehended in one word; but as these attributes are so amiable and encouraging, and as our happiness is so much concerned in them, it may be for our advantage to view each of them separately; and though there should be some degree of sameness, or repetition, in our so doing, I trust it will not be a vain or tiresome repetition. I shall therefore take a view of the *goodness of God*, as it respects creatures; the *mercy of God*, as it regards sinners; and the *love of God*, as it relates to believers. Now, by the goodness of God, we mean,

That disposition of the divine Being

which always inclines him to render his creatures happy, as far as is consistent with his other perfections.

The goodness of God is generally distinguished into *Absolute* and *Relative*. By *absolute goodness* is meant that essential property of his nature which he had in himself from eternity, before any creatures were formed, and without regard to creatures. His *relative goodness* is that perfection exercised towards his creatures; it is his generous disposition to do them good, and make them happy. Both are included in that Scripture (Psalm cxix. 68,) *Thou art good—and doest good*. God is infinitely, eternally, unchangeably good in himself; so that it may be truly said, *There is none good but one, that is God*, (Mark x. 18:) none good in comparison of him; none good originally, absolutely, perfectly, immutably, like him. But it is his goodness as *imparted*, as communicating good to his various and innumerable creatures, which we are now to contemplate. For this purpose he made the world, and placed therein a variety of creatures, which might be capable of receiving his goodness in a variety of ways, according to the distinct capacities of their several natures; but especially man, a rational creature, capable of knowing his benefactor, and of glorifying him for his bounty. It is the goodness of God to *man*, chiefly, that we shall now consider.

1. Observe then in the first place, the goodness of God to man in the formation of his body, in the powers of his mind, and in that state of holiness and happiness wherein he was originally placed.

The human body is indeed “fearfully and wonderfully made;” it cannot be surveyed without astonishment; every limb, every sense, every faculty, bears the clearest marks of the beneficent hand which produced it! The outward form of man is evidently far superior to that of the brutes. The delicacy of his composition, his erect posture, his beautiful countenance, his capacities of action and of enjoyment, give him a vast pre-eminence above all other creatures on earth; his supremacy over them, is admitted almost by them all—so that with little difficulty they are brought to spend their lives in his service.

But it is in the powers of his mind;—in his possession of a thinking, reasoning, immortal principle, that we perceive his chief superiority. The brutes have some advantages above us, in their speed and in the quickness of their senses; but “the inspiration of the Almighty has given us

understanding, and taught us more than the beasts of the field.” Every one who reflects on his own powers, his perception, his imagination, his judgment, his memory, must be sensible of their high value. These are sources of unspeakable enjoyment, usefulness, and happiness; affording a gratification, always at hand, and infinitely superior to the grosser pleasures of sense, which are often dearly purchased, which soon cloy, and, if irregularly indulged, are sure to destroy us. It is a wonderful privilege granted to man, that he is capable of knowing his God; and, while all other creatures are merely passive subjects of his goodness, man can reflect upon the bounty of his Maker—can “taste and see that he is good, and give to him the glory due to his name. God has also made us *immortal*. Other creatures have but scanty sources of pleasure; they enjoy them but for a short season; they die and perish: but man is born to live for ever. He is to be the inhabitant of another world; his days are to run parallel with those of God himself; and, if saved by grace, his happiness will be inconceivably great, and never, never terminate.

Look back also, and reflect on the goodness of God to man in his original state. He made man “in his own likeness, in his own image,” that is, in the image of his own wisdom, purity, and holiness, by which he was qualified to glorify his Maker on earth, and to enjoy superior bliss in his immediate presence in a future state. Surely the goodness of God was wonderfully displayed in the formation of man! Indeed, the Creator himself, surveying all his wonderful and excellent works, and especially man, the master, and the master-piece of them all, pronounced the whole to be “good”—to be “very good!”

2. Consider also, the ample provision made for the comfort of man. The world was made *for* him. “The earth hath he given to the children of men.” As man was made for the honor of God, so the world was made for the support and delight of man, in order to his due performance of his service to God. The sun and the moon were ordained to give him light; the grass is a beautiful carpet spread for his feet; the heavens are a splendid canopy stretched over his head; the trees afford him delicious food; the earth produces wholesome grain; the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea, furnish his table, in immense variety, with pleasant and nourishing food. His garments, whether for necessity or

ornament, are borrowed from the innocent sheep, the silk-worm, and the cotton-tree; the sturdy ox, and the generous horse, contribute their labor to lessen his toil, and enable him, with comparative ease, to cultivate the earth, and perform his journeys. The diversified beauties of nature,—the hills, the dales, the rocks, and rivers, and seas, delight his organs of vision; the songsters of the grove ravish his ears with their musical notes, and the flowers of the garden regale his nostrils with their fragrant odors. "Lord! what is man, that thou art mindful of him!" "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"

3. The goodness of God to man was discovered in placing him in so agreeable a state originally, and in giving him so holy and good a law. The commandment which he gave him, was not grievous. No more was required of him, than what was written on his heart, and which he had full power to perform. Obedience was easy and pleasant to him; it was the condition on which his own happiness and that of all his posterity, depended; and the threatening of death annexed, was a further instance of the goodness of God; because it was calculated to preserve him in his integrity, by the fear of ruin to himself and all his race.

4. The goodness of God is apparent in preserving the order of the universe, for the welfare of man. He who first made, still "upholds all things." The heavenly bodies perform, with the most astonishing punctuality, their appointed revolutions, any irregularity in which order might be fatal to the earth and to man; and a regular succession of the seasons is secured by the promise and providence of God. Hence we have "summer and winter, seed-time and harvest." "He visiteth the earth, and watereth it; he prepares the corn when he hath so provided for it; he blesseth the springing of the earth; he crowneth the year with his goodness, and his paths drop fatness; the little hills rejoice on every side; the pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing." Even the inferior creatures are the objects of his care. "The young lions roar, and seek their meat from God." All animals "wait upon him, that he may give them their meat in due season; that which he giveth them they gather; he openeth his hand, and they are filled with good." In a word,

"the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord."

5. To the same cause we must thankfully ascribe our defence against innumerable evils and dangers, seen and unseen. "O Lord, thou preservest man and beast!" Our greatest danger is from invisible enemies. What would evil spirits effect, were they permitted? Satan "goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour;" we are therefore taught to pray, "deliver us from evil," or rather, "from the evil one." The malice of evil spirits is plain from the case of Job, whose character, property, family, health, and life, were assailed by him; and whose security, Satan himself ascribes to the Almighty, in those remarkable words, "Hast thou not made a hedge about him, and about all that he hath?" The goodness of God is our shield and our defence.

Our security from wicked men is likewise from him. We too often see what wicked men would do, if they were permitted; but he sets bounds to their raging and cruel passions, as well as to the stormy billows of the ocean. "He stilleth the noise of the waves, and the tumult of the people." Without this restraint, how would murders, adulteries, robberies, perjuries, and oppressions, prevail in the world! Men would become, as the prophet speaks, "like the fishes of the sea," destroyers of each other,—"like the creeping things, which have no rule over them." And this should make us thankful for the wholesome laws, and the just government, of the country in which we live. It is by the instrumentality of the magistrate, that the peace and order of society are preserved: without this there would be no safety to our persons or property,—the world would be like a howling wilderness, infested by lions, and tigers, and serpents: but the "shields of the earth belong to God"—they are the effects and instruments of his goodness, and let this be acknowledged with gratitude by every man, "sitting under his vine and his fig-tree, without fear."

Let us, in like manner, ascribe to his goodness, that social order and good behavior, which generally prevail in this and in other civilized countries, and which contribute so much to the comfort of life. There are some faint traces of the moral law, upon the hearts of men, in general: and we owe still more to the common influence of Christian truth, Christian worship, and Christian example, upon multitudes of persons who, it may be feared, are not real

and serious Christians. But, considering man as a fallen creature, we ought to be thankful that the state of things is no worse than it is, and ascribe to his goodness whatever is moral, decent, peaceable, and commendable among men:—the kindness of parents, the dutifulness of children, the submission of servants, the fidelity of husbands and wives, the obedience of citizens, and the justice of magistrates, all are the effects of divine goodness.

Our daily exemption from surrounding evils is also the fruit of divine goodness. The “earth was cursed for man’s sake;” and Sin opened the flood-gates of Misery. That we are preserved, so generally as we are, and for many years together, from painful, lothesome, and dangerous diseases; from storms and tempests, lightning, earthquakes, and inundations, should be the theme of our daily praise. Nor should we lose sight of those seasonable alleviations, which are afforded to the afflicted. The arts of medicine and surgery, the provision of soothing and healing remedies, the hospitals, infirmaries, and dispensaries, which abound in our land, (and which are some of its most beautiful ornaments) the relief provided by our humane laws, so superior to the precarious charity of other countries; and the innumerable societies established among us, for the instruction of poor children, the visitation of the sick, the care of the insane, the blind, the deaf and dumb, and other benevolent purposes; all these benefits, through whatever channel they flow, must be traced to their original source, and that source is the goodness of God.

6. To form a just estimate of the divine bounty, let it be remembered, that it is bestowed upon unworthy and sinful creatures. God, who is infinitely holy, and who hates sin with a perfect hatred, might justly withdraw from his rebellious creatures all the tokens of his favor. This is, in fact, “the manner of men.” Men are used to feed their prisoners with “the bread of affliction, and the water of affliction;” and, “if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away?”—but the great and blessed God treats his bitterest enemies with kindness; and the generous conduct which he recommends to us, is no other than that which is constantly observed by himself—“If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head:” it is thus that he melts down his obdurate foes, and subdues them with the arms of love. Those, therefore, who have entertained a just view of them-

selves as guilty sinners, have expressed their admiration of the divine bounty in the strongest terms. Thus Jacob, when surveying the interpositions of Providence in his favor, exclaims, “I am less than the least of all thy mercies!” and David, reflecting on the beneficence of Heaven, in raising him to a crown, cries, “Who am I, O Lord God, that thou shouldest bring me hitherto!”

Thus we have taken a slight view of the goodness of God to man, in his original formation;—in the powers of his body and mind; in the ample provision made for his support and comfort; in the preservation of the world; his deliverance from innumerable evils,—and his enjoyment of innumerable blessings. All these are great, unspeakably great; but there is yet another display of his goodness which exceeds any one of these; which exceeds them all put together; which exceeds all the powers of language, all the stretch of conception—it is the *redemption of the world by Jesus Christ*—concerning this it is said—said by the lips of the Redeemer himself—“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” “There is more of his bounty,” says an eminent writer, “expressed in that one sentence, than there is in the whole volume of the world. It is an incomprehensible word—So: a word that all the angels of heaven cannot analyze. Few comment upon, or understand the dimensions of this so. In creation, he formed an innocent creature of the dust of the ground; in redemption, he restores a rebellious creature by the blood of his Son. It is greater than the goodness manifested in creation, in regard of the difficulty of effecting it; in regard of its immense cost; in regard of man’s desert of the contrary; it was greater goodness than was shown to the angels who stood,—greater than was granted to the angels who fell.” But as this must be the subject of a future discourse, we shall not now enlarge upon it. For the present, let us endeavor to make some practical use of the doctrine of divine goodness.

1. *Let God be praised for his goodness.* This is the pepper-corn of acknowledgment, which he demands, and expects of us; and how frequently does the writer of the 107th Psalm, in which the displays of divine bounty are enumerated, exclaim, “O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness!” Alas! that ungrateful man should need to be repeatedly urged to this reasonable and pleasant duty!

Let us not be satisfied with a *general* view of the goodness of God. Let every one of us review the blessings of God to *him* in particular. "Bless the Lord, O *my* soul, and all that is within *me*, bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O *my* soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all *thine* iniquities; who healeth all *thy* diseases: who redeemeth *thy* life from destruction, who crowneth *thee* with loving-kindness and tender mercies." Let each record his own history, and trace the streams of mercy in his infancy, childhood, and youth: in the tender cares of parents, now perhaps numbered with the dead; in the advantages of early education, and salutary restraint; in preservation from the disorders of infancy; in deliverance from some threatening danger. How many thousand times has thy table been spread with the good creatures of God! how many refreshing and comfortable meals hast thou enjoyed! how many thousand nights of safe and comfortable repose! how often has he restored thee from pain and sickness! what favorable turns took place in thy affairs! but time would fail to enumerate all his benefits: O forget not all his benefits!

2. *If such be the goodness of God, how base is the ingratitude of man!* so God himself complains. "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." The goodness of God is awfully abused by sinners. The goodness of God should excite the love of our hearts, and secure the obedience of our lives; but how is it perverted by sin! how is it abused to the purposes of luxury, of lewdness, of intemperance, of sabbath-breaking! How do men, like Jeshurun of old, wax fat, and kick against God; and thus, the bounties of Providence are turned into weapons of rebellion against their Giver, and instruments of destruction to themselves. "Do ye thus requite the Lord?" Is it thus, that "thou despisest the riches of his goodness, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?" But this cannot be done with impunity. God observes with a severe eye, and he will revenge with a heavy arm, the abuses of his kindness.

3. On the contrary, *Let the goodness of God attract our hearts*, and engage them to adore, love, obey, and trust in him. How great is his goodness! how great is his beauty! He is infinitely worthy to be supremely loved. Among men, the shadow of his goodness excites our esteem, and "for a good man, possibly some would even

dare to die." But the supreme Good demands our supreme regard. Let his name be adored;—let his worship be our delight;—let his praise be our employ;—let his commandments be our rule;—let his goodness encourage us to pray;—let his goodness invite us to trust in him, for "the Lord is good, he is a strong-hold in the day of trouble." He who gave us Christ, will withhold no good thing from them that love him. "O taste and see that the Lord is good! blessed is the man that trusteth in him." "O praise the Lord, for he is good; sing praises unto his name, for it is pleasant!"

4. *Let us imitate him.* Let us endeavor, in our humble measure, to resemble God in the goodness of his disposition, and to imitate him in acts of kindness to our fellow-men. Sufficient objects will ever surround us: "the poor ye have always with you, and whosoever ye will ye may do them good." "To do good, then, and to communicate, forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." For this purpose divine providence permits an inequality among men; some have too little; others have somewhat to spare; and it is a high privilege conferred upon any, that they are able and willing to help their neighbors. We ought to remember the saying of our Lord Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive:" and it is God-like to imitate our Savior, who "went about doing good." Nor let our favors be confined to the deserving. Our Lord's direction is this: "Bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good; and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." "Let us, therefore, as we have opportunity, do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

Finally. *Look forward to the heavenly world*, when the goodness of God will be fully displayed, and perfectly enjoyed. Here, we *taste* that the Lord is good; but it is only a taste,—the feast is reserved for the future and eternal state; and if the foretaste of his goodness on earth be so sweet, what will the complete fruition of it be? If, even now, the believer's peace be a "peace passing all understanding;" if the believer's joy be a "joy unspeakable and full of glory," what may be expected in that better world, where "God himself shall dwell with his people, and be their God!" When "God shall wipe away all

tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." Rejoice, then, in hope of this glory of God; for "in his presence there is fullness of joy,—at his right hand there are pleasures for evermore!"

PRAYER.—O GOD! thou art good: there is none good but thee; for thou only art infinitely, originally, perfectly, immutably good. Thou art good, and doest good; Heaven and earth are full of thy goodness. Man, especially, largely partakes of thy kindness,—in his original formation, in the powers of his body and mind, in the ample provision made for his support and comfort, in his deliverance from innumerable evils, and his enjoyment of innumerable blessings. Above all, thy goodness is displayed in the gift of thy dear Son, and in our redemption through his blood. O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! O God, we desire to feel our hearts attracted by thy love, and effectually drawn to adore, love, obey, and trust in thee, through Jesus Christ. And O that, having tasted of thy goodness to us, we may imitate it in our conduct to others. May we do good to all, even to our enemies; and, above all, to the household of faith: so shall we prove ourselves to be the children of thee, our Father who art in Heaven; so shall we hope fully and for ever to feast upon thy goodness in glory. Grant this, O Lord, we beseech thee, for the Redeemer's sake. Amen.

SERMON LXXV.

THE MERCY OF GOD.

Psalm lxii. 13. Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth Mercy.

In our meditations on the divine perfections, we proposed to take a distinct view of the *goodness*, the *mercy*, and the *love* of God; for though they are sometimes taken for each other, and, in some measure, included in each other, yet a separate consideration of them may be useful; especially as God's goodness relates to his creatures in general, and as *creatures*. Mercy relates to those only of his creatures which are *sinful*, and therefore *miserable*; and his love signifies the delight and complacency of his heart, in the special objects of his choice. We have already spoken of the divine goodness; let his *mercy* be the subject of our present discourse; and may we entertain such a view of this pleasing perfection, that we may learn to "hope in his mercy," and to "glorify him for his mercy." That which we shall now endeavor to prove and illustrate is, that

Mercy to miserable sinners is a distinguishing attribute of the blessed God.

Mercy, among men, is a soft and tender affection, arising in the mind on the view of human misery, accompanied by a desire to afford relief; and though we ought not to ascribe to God any painful feelings, any passion or agitation, grief or trouble, such as we feel, yet we may consider mercy in God as his disposition and readiness to relieve his miserable creatures. Our text asserts, that Mercy "*belongeth* to him," or is "*within him*;" that is, it belongs to his nature; it is inseparable from him; it belongs to him more than to any other being; so that nothing in his creatures deserves the name, compared with his mercy; for he is "the Father of mercies," and "he delighteth in mercy;" it is his glory,—for when Moses (as mentioned in a former discourse) desired to see his glory, he gratified him by proclaiming his names and titles, the first of which was "the Lord God, *merciful* and *gracious*—keeping *mercy* for thousands;" and this forms the chief ground of confidence and trust in him, as appears from this psalm. David had found, by experience, that confidence could not safely be reposed in man: but finding that God was possessed of almighty power, and also of infinite mercy, he declares his resolution to trust in him alone.

As mercy relates to *misery*, we must necessarily consider the mercy of God as extended to miserable man—to man in his fallen, sinful, helpless state, as a sinner; for, as "the whole need not the physician, but they who are sick," so none will seek or prize the mercy of God, but those who, in truth, feel, and confess themselves to be "miserable sinners." The Scriptures uniformly represent man as a depraved creature, having lost that original rectitude in which he was created. He is now so depraved, so "very far gone from original righteousness, that he is of his own nature inclined to evil." He is also actually guilty: charged with innumerable offences against God's holy law, in thought, word, and deed; "for what the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." Rom. iii. In this state, man must needs be miserable; for he is exposed to the righteous anger of an offended God; "the wages of sin is death;" and it is, indeed, "a fearful thing to fall into the hand of the living God." This is the real condition of every man, whether he be sensible of it or not. If he be not sensible of it, his case is so much the worse; his danger is increased by his ignorance of it, for of course he will not seek for mercy: if it be known, then will

the mercy of God be the chief desire of his soul, and his sincere prayer will be, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

That "mercy belongeth unto God," is the only truth that can support and cheer the real penitent. This is the relief of which the prophet speaks (Ps. cxxx. 1—3,) where the deep distress of some convinced sinners is thus described: "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord. If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? but there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared: let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plentiful redemption."

It seems to be a principal design of the word of God, and especially of the Gospel of Christ, to satisfy the penitent soul, that "mercy belongeth unto God." Without these gracious assurances, the self-condemned sinner would be ready to despair; for it is no uncommon thing for those who have just views of the holiness and justice of God, and of the extent and aggravations of their own sins, to fear that their iniquities are too great to be pardoned, and that there is no help for them in God. The tempter also, who "goeth about seeking whom he may devour," and who prevails upon many to neglect the mercy of God, as scarcely needing it, frequently suggests to those who have lately become religious, that there is no mercy for them. But the Gospel provides a sufficient antidote against despair; assures us that God is "rich in mercy to all that call upon him;" that "if the wicked man forsake his ways, he will have mercy upon him; he will abundantly pardon."

The grandest, the most affecting, the most satisfactory evidence of the divine mercy, appears in the person, character, sufferings, and death of the Son of God; for it might be said, How can God be *just*, if he be *merciful*? Is he not infinitely holy? Does he not hate sin most intensely? Has he not threatened to punish it with everlasting death? And is he not true to his threatenings? How then can the honor of his justice be maintained, if mercy be shown to the guilty sinner? This objection is reasonable. This inquiry is important. And the question could never have been resolved, had not God himself given the answer. The Gospel now informs us, that "Mercy and Truth meet together; Righteousness and Peace embrace each other." "The mercy of God is now exercised without prejudice to his justice, because justice received full satisfaction in the death of Christ, the sinner's surety;

so that there is justice in punishing the sin, and mercy in relieving the sinner. The sin is punished by justice, in the Surety, and pardoned by mercy, in the sinner: so that he is just without impairing the honor of his mercy, and merciful without invading the rights of his justice."

This shows with what propriety Jesus Christ bears the name of "MERCY;" for when Zacharias praised God on the birth of John, the harbinger of Christ, he cries, "Blessed be God, for he hath visited and redeemed his people! to perform the MERCY promised to our fathers." Luke i. 72. Christ was the mercy promised from the beginning; the mercy of all mercies, the matchless, the invaluable, the unspeakable mercy—the greatest and the best that God himself could bestow on a fallen world, for he is the medium of all divine communications with man; the great, the only channel, through which his mercy flows to the guilty children of Adam.

That we may the better conceive of the nature and extent of the divine mercy, let us attend to some of its properties.

1. *It is free and sovereign.* Mercy, indeed, is essential to his nature, and inseparable from it; we cannot conceive of God but as being merciful; yet, the exercise of his mercy is free and sovereign; it is regulated by his will and wisdom; and bestowed in such a way as is consistent with his infinite justice and holiness, and a due regard to the authority of his law, and the honor of his government. Wherever it is bestowed, it is freely bestowed; none can say they deserve mercy. Some ignorantly talk "of making themselves worthy of the mercy of God, by their repentance and reformation!" but this is to turn mercy into debt, and to set up merit is to destroy mercy. It is plain that all sinners do not obtain mercy; many neglect it; many live and die wholly careless about it, their hearts being hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; if any therefore obtain mercy, it is from God who gives the desire, inspires the prayer, and leads the soul gladly to receive it through the hands of the Mediator. God himself declares the sovereignty of his mercy, saying to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion: so then (St. Paul concludes) it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." Rom. ix. 15, 16. Indeed, that apostle was himself a marvellous instance of the freedom and sovereignty of divine mercy, which he frankly owns; for "I," says he, "was be-

fore a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and unjurious; but I have obtained mercy." He calls himself "the Chief of Sinners," but he was one of those "vessels of mercy afore prepared unto glory," in which God was pleased "to make known the riches of his glory," that is, of his mercy: and this leads us to observe,

2. That *it is rich, and exceedingly abundant*. It is worthy of the infinite Being who bestows it. We read in Scripture of "great mercy,"—"abundant mercy,"—"tender mercy,"—and—" manifold mercies." God is said to be—"rich in mercy,"—"plenteous in mercy,"—and "to keep mercy for thousands." There is a fullness of mercy in God that is inexhaustible; riches of mercy that cannot be counted; multitude of mercies which cannot be numbered. Who can number the objects of mercy? Who can recount the mercies that every one of them has received? So that each of them may adopt the pious words of the Psalmist, "Many, O Lord my God, are the wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered." Ps. lx. 5. And if such be the amount of mercies received by one individual, what must be the total sum of those received by a whole world! This has been the anchor of hope to myriads, who must else have perished in despair. This encouraged Moses to plead in behalf of Israel, when their destruction was threatened (Numb. xiv. 17,) "And now, I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, according as thou hast spoken, saying, The LORD is long-suffering and of great mercy, &c.—Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, according unto the greatness of thy mercy; and the Lord said, I have pardoned according to thy word." In like manner, encouragement is offered to the almost despairing penitent (Ps. cxxx. 7.) "Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is *plenteous* redemption."

3. Let us add, that this mercy of God is *effectual*—effectual for the complete relief, and perfect salvation of those who obtain it. Mercy, in man, is often ineffectual: it is merely pity and compassion; it looks, and sighs, and offers words of sympathy and condolence, or pours forth prayers to the Father of mercies; but the case is too aggravated, the object is too far gone to admit of relief from human hands: but the mercy of God is accompanied with

infinite power; and there can be no perplexity so complicated, no danger so imminent, no distress so deep, in which his merciful hand cannot afford effectual relief. "Give us help from trouble, O God, for vain is the help of man:" "thy mercy is great above the heavens, and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds." Ps. cviii. 4, 12.

The mercy of God is comprehensive—that is, it includes, or is connected with, every other desirable good. The soul that requests it may say, "O *satisfy* us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days." The blessing of pardoning mercy comes not alone: it is the first link in the golden chain of salvation; connected with all the rest, and insuring to the happy possessor, grace and glory; for no good thing will be withholden from the objects of mercy. "He that spared not his own Son," the chief mercy, the channel of all other mercies, "but freely gave him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things!" This shows the unspeakable value of mercy!

5. *It is perpetual*. It always resides in God; in every age of the world he continues to display it; and wherever it is once bestowed, it shall never be withdrawn. In a psalm of praise, much used in the Jewish church, this attribute of God is peculiarly celebrated, and the perpetuity of divine mercy is repeatedly declared. Twenty-six times in that Psalm it is said, *His mercy endureth for ever*. Ps. cxxxvi. This was the chorus of a spiritual song, in which the various blessings of creation and Providence are recited, on account of all which it is said, "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever!"

Indeed, it has been the same in all ages of the world. All men have needed it, and millions have obtained it. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and all the patriarchs and prophets; the penitents to whom John the baptist preached; the apostles and disciples of our Lord; and all believers from that day to this—all have sought, obtained, and praised God for his mercy. How richly was Mercy displayed in and by the Lord Jesus Christ! *HIMSELF* the chief Mercy; Mercy was incarnate in him. It was Mercy that brought him down from the throne of glory, and induced him to dwell in a tabernacle of clay; it was Mercy that led him to become a poor, despised man, and to endure the contradiction of sinners against himself; it was mercy that nailed him to the cross, and laid him in the tomb;

and he has risen to the throne of universal empire, with his heart as full as ever of mercy to sinful man. In the high office he sustains, as a Priest upon his throne, he forgets not the miseries of man: "for we have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities:" he who, on earth, was tempted in all points as we now are, still retains a sympathetic heart; and is as ready to pity and relieve the poor sufferer as when, himself a traveller on earth, he went about doing good, exercising compassion, instructing the ignorant, healing the sick, and comforting the mourner. Having therefore such a high priest, "Let us come with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

And, blessed be God, this mercy once bestowed, shall never be withdrawn. "The gift and callings of God are without repentance." Were the objects of mercy left to themselves, to the deceitfulness of sin, and to the wiles of the tempter, they would soon forfeit every blessing, and wander irrecoverably from God: but he who had mercy "because he would have mercy," has engaged, by covenant, to "put his fear in their hearts, that they may not depart from him; they shall therefore persevere in the good way of faith and holiness, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life;" then the final manifestations, fruits, and effects of his mercy shall appear, when a complete period shall be put to sin and sorrow, and his people shall enter into his glory, and sit down with him on his throne. Then, with an emphasis before unknown, the joyful song shall be shouted by myriads of voices, "O praise the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever!"

And now, let us take care to improve, to practical purposes, this encouraging attribute of the divine Being. Does mercy belong to God? *O let us take care to seek it in time!* Do we not need it? Are we not very justly styled, "Miserable Sinners?" Only "fools make a mock at sin." All thinking and serious persons will readily admit that they are sinners; and, as such, that they need mercy. But are our hearts affected with this conviction?—deeply affected?—durably affected? Some slight and transient thoughts of needing mercy, most men have at times, especially in the hour of affliction, and in the apprehension of death; but they soon pass off. No use is made of them. They do not lead to fervent prayer for mercy; and the general notions that some

men have of mercy are sadly abused. They take encouragement to continue in sin, because they think that God is merciful, and they may obtain mercy whenever they please. But let such persons know, that this presumption is exceedingly displeasing to God. As he is infinitely merciful to penitent sinners, who are inclined to forsake their sins, so he is infinitely just to take vengeance on hard-hearted and impenitent transgressors, who presume upon his mercy. He hath said (Ps. lxxviii. 21,) "God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses;" and again he hath said (Ps. lix. 5,) "He will not be merciful to any wicked transgressors." Again he saith to him who cries "I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart—the Lord will not spare him, but the anger of the Lord shall smoke against that man." Deut. xxix. 20. Beware, then, of abusing mercy; and let not the present moment be neglected. To-morrow may be too late. "Now is the accepted time. To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Hereafter the door will be shut, and many shall seek to enter in, but shall not be able. When God had shut Noah into the ark, there was no refuge for the drowning multitudes, who refused his calls to repentance. But now he saith, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Isa. lv. 7. Only turn to God through Christ, and beg him to help you to do it. If you turn to the Lord, he will have mercy upon you. It is his own word. "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sin, shall have mercy." Prov. xxviii. 13. If you will not come to Christ, you will not, cannot, have life; but coming to him, "you shall in no wise be cast out," but obtain mercy, and "the blood of Jesus Christ shall cleanse you from all sin."

The mercy of God affords great encouragement to prayer. In the temple of Solomon there was a *Mercy-seat*—this was the cover of the Ark, sprinkled with the blood of atonement, towards which all who offered up their petitions at the hour of prayer, turned their faces. Towards this seat of mercy the penitent Publican looked (in spirit at least) when he presented that humble but successful petition, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" We too have a "a throne of grace," sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb, to which we are kindly

invited with confidence to approach, "that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in every time of need." A persuasion that God "is rich in mercy" to all who call upon him, will inspire us with holy boldness. This will furnish us with the Psalmist's plea, "Great are thy tender mercies, O Lord, quicken me according to thy judgments!" Again, he pleads, "Deal well with thy servant, according to thy mercy;" or, as another eminent believer pleaded, "We do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousness, but for thy great mercies."

Does mercy belong to God? *Then let humble believers trust, and not be afraid.* Think highly, think largely of divine mercy. "He will abundantly pardon." He will readily pardon. His thoughts are not as man's contracted thoughts—his ways are not as man's limited ways: but superior, as the heavens are above the earth. Enlarge, then, your views of the mercy of God. Cherish extended thoughts of his goodness; and say, with the Psalmist, "I will hope in thy mercy;" "I trust in the mercy of the Lord for ever;" and this will induce you to

Thank God for his mercy. Look back and consider how much you owe to mercy! How many dangers have you escaped! how many deliverances experienced! how many benefits received! Reflect on his *preventing* mercies; how many sins were you prevented from committing! his *providing* mercies; how constantly hath he supplied your returning wants! his *restoring* mercies, recovering you from the very borders of the grave! but, above all, think of his *pardoning* mercies!—how hath he "multiplied to pardon" your renewed and multiplied transgressions! O then "praise the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever! let the redeemed of the Lord (especially) say so, and add, "How precious are thy thoughts (of mercy) unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them; if I should count them, they are more than the sand." And when you reflect upon this vast profusion of mercies, reflect also on your total unworthiness of them, of any of them. What God has done for you, was not only *without* merit, but *contrary* to it. So far were you from deserving any favor, that you deserved his anger; he might not only have withheld his blessings, but he might justly have punished your transgressions. Forget not then to make some grateful return for his favors. "They are new every morning." Let your praises be as frequently renewed. Offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and in the spirit of

the patriarch Jacob, who had a long experience of the divine favor, say, "I am less than the least of all thy mercies!"

Finally, *Let us imitate divine mercy.* They who have obtained mercy, should certainly show mercy. Such persons can never be covetous, hard-hearted, cruel, or oppressive. Shall he, to whom ten thousand talents have been forgiven, seize his brother by the throat for a few pence? It is impossible. If you forgive not men their trespasses, it is certain that you are not forgiven. But, on the contrary, Christians, "Put ye on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if a man have a quarrel against any. Even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." Such is the scriptural direction to those who have received mercy; and this will be the best evidence of having received it; for thus said he who will be our Judge, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy!"

PRAYER.—UNTO thee, O Lord our God, be-
longeth mercy; thou art the Father of Mercies;
thou keepest mercy for thousands, thou delight-
est in mercy. Therefore are we encouraged to
come to the throne of thy grace, to obtain mercy
through Jesus Christ, the chief mercy promised
to the fathers, and whom thou hast set forth to
be a propitiation through faith in his blood. We
greatly rejoice, that in Jesus mercy and truth
meet together; thou art just, without impairing
the honor of thy mercy, and merciful, without
invading the rights of thy justice. May the Holy
and blessed Spirit manifest to us the riches of thy
mercy, in its sovereignty, its abundance, its effi-
cacy, its comprehensiveness, and in its perpetuity,
for thy mercy endureth for ever.

O that sinners, who so much need thy mercy,
may be sensible of their need! May the wicked
forsake his way, and turn to the Lord, who will
have mercy upon him; even to thee, O God, who
wilt abundantly pardon. And may we, who
have obtained mercy, and who are less than the
least of all thy mercies, abound in praise, and
offer continually the sacrifice of thanksgiving,
through Jesus Christ; to whom with the Father
and Holy Ghost be everlasting praises. Amen

SERMON LXXVI.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

2 Cor. xiii. 14. And the Love of God be with you all.

THESE words are a part of the benedic-
tion usually pronounced at the close of
public worship in Christian congregations.
They are the words of St. Paul, in the
conclusion of his second epistle to the

church at Corinth, by which he expresses his best wishes on their behalf; as if he had said, "May the perpetual favor of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the constant and peculiar love of God the Father, and the most abundant communication of the Holy Spirit, in his gifts and graces, be with you, and remain with you, even with all the members of the church of Corinth!" "It is with great reason," says an eminent divine, "that this comprehensive and instructive benediction is pronounced just before our assemblies for public worship are dismissed; and it is a very indecent thing to see so many quitting them, or getting into postures of removal, before this short sentence can be ended."

That this excellent and desirable privilege, which St. Paul so fervently wished might be enjoyed by the Corinthian Christians, may be ours also, let us make it the subject of our devout meditations at this time; and "may the love of God be shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit!" But, how difficult is it to conceive aright of the love of God! When we contemplate the firmament, and survey the starry heavens, we are constrained, from a sense of our own insignificance, to exclaim, "Lord! what is man, that thou art mindful of him! The condescensions of divine Providence are also truly wonderful; but the special love of God to sinful men, as displayed in their everlasting salvation, is beyond all description;—it "passeth knowledge!"

Love, among mortals, is that affection of the human heart which inclines us to take delight in a chosen object, and to seek the good and happiness of that object. The love of God is that holy affection by which he condescends to take a pleasure in his chosen people, to confer special favors upon them, kindly to accept their persons and services, and to make them eternally happy. That such is the love of God to his church, is abundantly evident from the testimonies of his word, and from innumerable facts. Take a few of his own declarations.

He was pleased to select the posterity of Abraham from among all other nations, and to treat them with distinguished attention; concerning which he says, (Deut. vii. 6—8,) "The Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth: the Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people, (for ye were the fewest of all people;) but because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers;" and in Deut. x. 15,

"Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you, above all people." It is also said, (Ps. lxxviii. 68,) "He chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved." It is written in another place, (Ps. cxlvi. 8,) "The Lord loveth the righteous." Particular persons are also described as the objects of divine love—"Jacob have I loved;" and our Savior said to his disciples, "The Father himself loveth you."

But it is not by *words* merely that God has manifested his love (though there is no difference between *his* professions and practices, as there too often is among men) he has evinced his love by the most valuable gifts, by the most generous and benevolent actions.

1. *God, in his infinite love, has given us his Son, his own, his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ.*

Jesus Christ is the Son of God in a peculiar sense, in a much higher sense than any other being. Angels are called sons of God—Adam was the son of God—believers are also the sons of God; but Christ, in an infinitely higher sense, is the Son of God. He is called his *only-begotten* Son, which surely implies that he is a partaker of the same *divine nature* with his Father. Jesus Christ had a being before he made his appearance in this world. God is therefore said to *send* his Son into the world. And the acknowledgment of this was reckoned by St. John an important branch of the true Christian faith, for, says he (1 John iv. 2,) "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is *come in the flesh*, is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God: this is that spirit of *Antichrist*—(that is, *against* Christ) which is already in the world. If we compare this expression, *Christ's coming in the flesh*, with the first chapter of St. John's Gospel, (verses 1st and 14th) we shall find that it affords a proof of the divinity of our Savior; for the apostle there says, "In the beginning was the *WORD*, and the *WORD* was with God, and the *WORD* was God;" he also says (ver. 14) "The *WORD* was *made flesh*, and dwelt among us." Christ, then, the Son of God, who *came in the flesh*, and *was made flesh*, or became man, is a divine person, "the *WORD*, who was with God (the Father,) and was God; and being now man also, is God the Son"—"Immanuel—God with us."

Here, then, is the most astonishing display of divine love!—"herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for

sins." 1 John iv 10. Well might St. Paul exclaim, "Thanks be to God, for his *unspeakable* gift!"

The degraded state of man, on whom this gift was bestowed, wonderfully enhances the love which bestowed it; for "when we were yet sinners, Christ" was born, lived, and "died for us." How deplorably is man fallen! what a horrible mixture of the brute and the fiend is exhibited in many of the children of Adam! Look at the frightful, but faithful picture, drawn by St. Paul in the first chapter of his epistles to the Romans—a picture which too nearly resembles thousands still. Behold a rebel universe—our species up in arms against their God! See how men are "haters of God"—their carnal minds full of enmity against him; they reject his authority; they trample on his laws; they devote themselves to brutal lusts, depraved appetites, drunkenness, lewdness, unnatural vices, cruelty, oppression, murder,—and yet, hear it, O heavens! give ear and be astonished, O earth! for such, even for such vile and sinful rebels, God gave his only-begotten Son!

The Love of God, in this gift, appears to be still more wonderful, when we consider the deep humiliation to which he was subjected. To have united the divine nature with humanity in any form, in the highest form, or under any circumstances, even the most glorious, would have displayed a condescension which can have no name, no parallel; but for the Son of God to submit to abject poverty; to live a life of constant self-denial; to endure the contradiction of sinners against himself; to bear with the vilest indignities and insults, and those in return for innumerable acts of kindness, and, to complete the scene, to be tried as a malefactor, to be unjustly condemned, to be barbarously mangled by cruel scourges, to be nailed like a criminal slave to the cross, there to agonize and to die,—and all this for guilty rebels!—O it is astonishing! no words of mortals can describe, no hearts of mortals can duly conceive of that divine love which is the source of all this.

"Let all the world fall down, and know
That none but God such love could show."

2. *Another method by which the love of God is manifested, is in the gift of his Word, his Gospel, by which we come to know his love; for without this, even the gift of his Son would have been of little avail.*

He was pleased to dart into the minds of his prophets and apostles a ray of supernatural light. At sundry times and in divers

manners he spake unto the fathers by the prophets; and to Jesus Christ they all bare witness; they testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow; and, when all that they predicted had been accomplished, he inspired holy men to write the history of his birth, teaching, miracles, death, and resurrection, in what we call the Gospels. Others were equally inspired to write epistles to the first Christians, explaining at large the nature of that salvation which he had procured; the faith by which it becomes ours; the hope that we are warranted to indulge, and the holy temper and conduct which all believers must discover. "To us is the word of this salvation sent!" Let us prize it, according to its inestimable value; let us bind it to our hearts; let it be our meditation day and night; let it be sweeter to our taste than honey and the honeycomb, and more valuable than the gold of Ophir. It is the gift of divine love!

3. *Nor is the gift of the Holy Spirit less necessary than the gift of the Savior himself, for without his enlightening and renewing influences, we cannot savingly know or receive him.* His office is "to glorify Jesus;" for which purpose "he takes the things of Christ and sheweth them to us;" and God is said to give us his spirit, "that we may know the things which he hath freely given us." So necessary are his influences, that without them no man can say in faith and in sincerity, "Jesus is the Lord." So necessary was it for the Spirit to descend on the church, that Christ said, "It is expedient for me to go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you;"—"and when he is come, he will guide you into all truth." Yea, so necessary is this gift, and the reception of it, that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

4. *The love of God is farther displayed in the forgiveness of sins.*

Among men, an enemy usually resents a great offence, aggravates its evils, and meditates revenge; but love is rather grieved, than angry, when an injury is committed; is disposed to pardon, and, perhaps, seeks an occasion to be reconciled to the offender. Such, and infinitely more, is the condescending love of our offended God. He who could, at any time, and by any means, take the deserved vengeance, stoops to send his messengers to assure us of his friendly disposition towards us; warns us of the danger of persisting in our rebellion; and "in Christ's stead they

beseech us to be reconciled to him." This readiness to forgive, he has been pleased most pathetically to display in the charming parable of the Prodigal Son. There, the father of the once licentious youth is represented as beholding with compassion his forlorn, his penitent, and returning son, while yet a great way off, and running, with eager haste, to receive and embrace him! Affecting emblem of divine love! Such is the readiness with which the Father of mercies will still receive all who forsake their sins, and return to him by Jesus Christ. "Verily, there is joy in heaven over every sinner that repenteth," over every sinner that is pardoned; and in every such instance the love of God is glorified.

5. *God commendeth his love to us still more, in making the most abundant provision for our comfort and happiness in the present world.*

As parents are strongly attached to their children, and with pleasure provide them with food, and raiment, and education, and portions, so our heavenly Father kindly receives pardoned sinners into his family, and puts them amongst his children. "Behold!" saith St. John (observe it with the highest admiration,) "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" Behold what provision he hath made for our souls! He gives us his holy Sabbaths, his blessed bible, his faithful ministers, his sacred ordinances, his precious promises. He holds intercourse with our spirits, admits us to communion with himself, allows us to tell him all our fears and all our desires, and assures us that he will withhold from us no good thing. He bids us dismiss all anxious concern, for he himself "careth for us;" he will be our guide; he will be our shield, he will make all things work together for our good, and will never, never leave nor forsake us! O what manner of love is this!

And "if he doth so much for us in the prison, what will he do for us in the palace!" We are yet minors. But "if children, then heirs,—heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." Even now, believers are immensely rich. Read the unparalleled inventory of their wealth (1 Cor. iii. 21 :) "*All things are yours*"—the world is the first article—as much of the world as their Father sees good to bestow, and, indeed, *all the world* in a sense, for all things lead their minds to God; "they are steps by which they ascend to their Creator, for in them all, they view, as in a bright mirror, his adorable perfections, and

in that meditation exult. Above all, they perceive in them the love of God towards them. When they view the sun, moon, and stars, they rejoice that their heavenly Father has lighted up so many tapers for them, at which they may work what becomes the sons of God: nor do they less admire these, than if every one of them had his own sun, or his own moon, shining upon him. Indeed, "all things are for the elect's sake"—*life and death*; things present and things to come,—all are theirs, for they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

6. *But all this is merely an EARNEST of the intended inheritance*;—"the first fruits of the Spirit;" for who can tell what God hath laid up and prepared for them in Heaven? Who can tell what vast powers they may possess, as superior perhaps to what they now enjoy, as the talents of angels are now superior to those of men? Who can tell what a glorious habitation they shall occupy?—their "Father's mansions" will be worthy of himself, and Jesus Christ, who is gone to prepare them, will come again and receive his people to himself, that where he is, they may be also. Who can tell what pleasant employments shall engage their improved and delighted spirits! Who can tell what blessed and glorious company they shall keep?—saints and angels will certainly be their associates, and "Christ himself shall be with them;" and they shall be "for ever with the Lord!"

Such are some of the *effects* of the love of God to men! But who can possibly describe it aright? A consideration, however, of some of its *properties* may a little assist our conceptions.

1. *It is everlasting*.—"I have loved thee with an everlasting love." Jer. xxxi. 3. From before the foundation of the world, God foresaw the apostasy and misery of man, and determined to show his love to the human race. The effects of this love **were** determined upon, and the peculiar objects of it were selected. They were "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world," that "they should be holy, and without blame, before him in love;"—"they were predestinated to the adoption of children, by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace," so St. Paul expresses it in Eph. i. 4, 5, 6. How greatly does this enhance the value of the love of God, and fill with sacred admiration and astonishment the hearts of those in whom this love is shed abroad by the Holy Ghost! they are amazed to think that the great and glorious God should

vouchsafe to think of *them*; of them, insignificant and rebellious creatures, and inscribe *their* unworthy names in the book of life!!!

2. *It is free and sovereign.* It is not fixed on any particular person on account of any foreseen excellency and superiority. Whatever be excellent in any person, is the *effect* of this love, and not its *cause*. All men are depraved, polluted and undone. God was not bound to show kindness to any one of Adam's fallen race; but, saith he (Rom. ix. 15,) "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion;" and in another place, he saith, "I will love them freely." Hos. xvi. 4. If one man differ from another, it is grace that causeth him to differ; and, therefore, to free grace is all the glory to be ascribed, as our Lord doth: (Luke x. 21,) "I thank thee, Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

3. *The love of God is unchangeable.* The love of mortals is liable to much variation; not so the love of God; "he rests in his love:"—"having loved his own, he loves them to the end." Their sense of it may vary, and God may hide his face; and he will do so "if his children forsake his ways, and decline from his commandments;" in love to their souls, "he will visit their transgressions with the rod;" to bring them back again; "but his loving-kindness he will not take away, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail." Ps. lxxxix. 30. No,—“the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, saith the Lord of hosts, that hath mercy on thee.” Isa. liv. 10.

IMPROVEMENT.

For the practical improvement of this subject we propose the four following directions:—

1. *Believe the love of God*, according to what St. John saith (1 John iv. 16:) "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love." To know and to believe this, is to know and believe the whole Gospel; for this is indeed the substance of it. The love of God is so exceedingly great, that it is said to "surpass knowledge;" but it does not surpass belief. We cannot fully *comprehend* it, for it is infinite; but we may *believe* it on the testimony of God himself; without which, such is its astonishing greatness, that it might have seemed incredible, but

resting on the divine testimony concerning it, we may survey it with delight and pleasure; "its breadth and length, and depth and height," that "we may be filled with all the fullness of God."

2. *Receive the love of God.* It is proposed to us in the Gospel as the grand attraction—that which is calculated to draw us away from sin and folly, and to raise our affections towards superior objects.—"God commendeth his love towards us"—he sets it before us, and recommends it to our notice, to raise our faith, our hope, our admiration, our love, and our joy, by this peculiar excellency of it—that "while we were yet *sinners*," he sent his dear Son into the world; who "gave himself a ransom" for our souls. Surely, this should draw our souls to God, and cause us instantly, and most thankfully, to receive the gifts of his love. Let us be encouraged to come to God, for God is love.

3. *Return the love of God*—make a suitable return for love so vast and so free. This was the first and great command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength;" and what can be so powerful an inducement to this as the astonishing love of God to us? Let us say with St. John, "We love him, because he first loved us;"—that is, *in consequence* of his having first loved us, without which we never should have loved him; and also, from a *view* and *sense* of his having first loved us. He is altogether lovely in himself, and we are under inexpressible obligations to his love; let us love him, therefore, supremely, and prove our love to him by keeping his commandments. "If ye love me," saith Christ, keep my commandments." We cannot love him as we ought, nor as he deserves to be loved; but let us love him as we can, and daily lament that we love him no better. Let us prefer his glory above all that is dear to us, and be ready to part with all things for his sake. Thrice did our Lord propose the question to Peter, "Lovest thou me?" and thrice did the zealous apostle declare his attachment. Our Savior then directed him how to demonstrate his affection—"Feed my sheep." In like manner, let us evince the sincerity of our regard to God, by a ready compliance with his whole will.

4. *Imitate the love of God.* Nothing can render man so truly amiable, as to resemble, in his humble measure, the God of love; and nothing can afford a brighter evidence of our being the objects of *his* love; for, by this, said Christ, "shall all

men know that ye are my disciples—if ye have love one to another.” This is Christ’s *own* commandment,—his *new* commandment; old indeed in substance, but new in form, and enforced by a new obligation. “A new commandment give I unto you, That ye love one another. As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.” John xiii. 14. He has left among us suitable objects of Christian love—all his members, and especially those who need our care. “The poor ye have always with you; but me ye have not always; and whensoever ye will ye may do them good.” “Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God: and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God; he that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love.” 1 John iv. 7, 8. O let the love of God constrain us to cultivate every amiable temper, and to be forward in every act of kindness to the bodies and souls of men, and especially to all the sons and daughters of affliction; for thus shall we resemble our heavenly Father, and our adorable Savior, who, when he shall appear in his glory, at his second advent, will graciously accept and reward every “labor of love,” saying, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me.” “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”

PRAYER.—O LORD our God, how excellent is thy name in all the earth,—especially thy new, best name of LOVE; and thanks for ever be to thee, if we have known and believed the love that thou hast unto us. God is love. Glory be to thee for this declaration of thy nature in thy name. May the Holy Spirit shed abroad thy love in our hearts. We are amazed at the love of God, in Christ, to sinners of mankind! we survey, with astonishment, the height, the depth, the length, and the breadth of this stupendous love, which surpasseth all human conception! We behold, with delight, the proofs of thy love in the unspeakable gift of thy only-begotten Son; in the gift of thy word; in the gift of thy Spirit; in the pardon of our sins, in all our temporal and spiritual comforts, and in the promise and earnest of eternal glory. O give us to know that we are the object of thy love; and may we, in return, love thee, our God and Savior, supremely, and prove the sincerity of our love, by love to thy people and obedience to thy commandments; and this we beg for the alone sake of Jesus Christ the righteous. Amen.

SERMON LXXVII.

THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD.

1 Corinthians i. 9. God is faithful.

EACH of the divine Perfections is necessary to the complete happiness of a Chris-

tian; not one of them can be dispensed with. That God is *Almighty*, and *Wise*, and *Holy*, and *Just*, and *Good*, is the joy of every believer’s heart; but there is another perfection, in which the Christian seems to be (if possible) still more interested—that is, his TRUTH, or FAITHFULNESS: for the life of every real Christian, while in this world, is a life of faith; and as faith has respect to the word of God, his faithfulness to that word must be the principal ground of his faith and hope, and consequently of his joy, for his joy and peace are “in believing.” There is nothing, therefore, which respects the divine character, that is more immediately connected with our Christian walk, than the *veracity* or *faithfulness* of God. The assertion of St. Paul in the text, furnishes us with a short, clear, and full proposition, which it shall be our present business scripturally to illustrate, and practically to improve.

GOD IS FAITHFUL.

Truth is essential to the very existence of God.—It is as impossible to conceive of a God without truth, as of a God without power. Truth is therefore inseparable from his nature. The true God is truth itself. He is the first, chief, and greatest truth, and the source of all truth; so that all things are true or false, as they agree or disagree with their original patterns in the mind of God.

The value of truth is acknowledged by mankind in general. Fallen and corrupt as men are, they have not altogether lost sight of the value of truth: if destitute of it themselves, still they prize it in others. If they do not possess it, they wish to be thought to possess it. Hence no affront is reckoned so great as being called a liar; it is deemed disgraceful, and so it ought to be deemed, for this is the character of the Devil himself: “He is a liar, and the father of it.” Most awfully do they resemble him, who speak lies; they “are of their father, the Devil, and the works of their father they will do.” But the blessed God is infinitely true, and it is absolutely impossible for him to lie. The heathens themselves (in civilized countries) were sensible of the value of truth. One of their wise men said, that “if God should render himself visible to men, he would choose light for his body, and truth for his soul.” The Romans built a temple which they dedicated to Truth, whom they called the Sister of Justice; and the most solemn oaths were taken in her name. Indeed, an oath is a kind of sacrifice offered to Truth.

What reason thus approves, Revelation abundantly confirms and ascribes Truth to God as an essential perfection of his nature. Even Balaam, that wicked prophet, was constrained to say, "God is not a man that he should lie; neither the Son of man, that he should repent" (or change his mind:) "Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Numb. xxii. 19. He is called in Scripture "The God of Truth"—"The Lord God, abundant in Truth." Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is also called "He that is true"—"faithful and true:" and the Holy Ghost is called "The Spirit of Truth." The extent and glory of this perfection is expressed in these lofty terms (Ps. xxxvi. 5,) "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds" (or skies.)—"I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations: I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever; thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens." "O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee, or to faithfulness round about thee?" Ps. lxxxix. 1, 2, 8. The heavens and the heavenly bodies excite our admiration; we see, but cannot comprehend them; they are above our reach, and too large for our grasp: but they are emblems of the power, the mercy, and the truth of God: we see, we admire, we adore these divine perfections; but finite minds can never comprehend them.

The excellency of the divine faithfulness will more fully appear, when we perceive that it results from, or stands connected with, all his other perfections.

1. *It is connected with his POWER.* Ps. cxlvi. 6. "He who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is therein—*He keepeth truth for ever.*" His almighty power enables him, without the possibility of failure, to accomplish all his promises and threatenings. Honest men, however desirous of keeping their word, may be prevented by the unexpected occurrences of insuperable difficulties; but the designs of the Almighty cannot be frustrated. "With God all things are possible." "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" said the reproving angel to the wife of Abraham, when her faith once staggered at the promise. Abraham himself was "strong in faith, giving glory to God"—the glory of his power and his fidelity combined, for "he was fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able to perform." Rom. iv. 21. In like manner, the apostle of the Gentiles feels perfect composure in the pros-

pect of martyrdom, well knowing "whom he had believed," and being "fully persuaded that he was *able* to keep that which he committed unto him." If Noah is to be preserved amidst a drowning world, if Israel is to be delivered from the Egyptian yoke, or to be sustained in a barren wilderness, or to subdue the warlike nations of Canaan, no obstacles shall prevent the promised events; infinite power and infinite faithfulness render them perfectly certain; wisdom prescribes the means; omnipotence makes them effectual; and God is faithful.

2. *The faithfulness of God is connected with his holiness*; indeed it is a branch of it,—without which he could not be holy. "There is no unrighteousness in him." "He cannot lie; it is impossible for God to lie." "He is not a man, that he should lie." Lies are the wretched fruit of man's apostasy—his loss of the divine image, the corruption of his once holy nature: but God is unalterably holy; therefore it is said (Ps. lxxxix. 35,) "Once have I sworn by my holiness (and I will not lie unto David) his seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me." Well, therefore, might the Psalmist say, "God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice;" for thus the holiness of God is a pledge of his faithfulness.

3. *The faithfulness of God is necessary from his unchangeableness.* He is the only being absolutely and necessarily unchangeable. Angels have changed, and become devils; Man is changed, and become a rebel! but "I am the Lord," saith he, "I change not;" and it follows, as the blessed effect of his unchangeableness "therefore, ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." Mal. iii. 6. Men frequently change their mind, sometimes from good to evil, at other times from evil to good: their second thoughts are best; but God's thoughts can neither be improved nor depraved; they are originally, perfectly, unalterably good. It was the pride of the Medes and Persians that they would not alter their laws; it was on the proud presumption that they were so wisely framed as to admit of no improvement; but such, indeed, are the laws and the promises of God; with him is no variable-ness, nor shadow of turning." The promises and vows of men (like Jephtha's and Herod's) are sometimes unlawful in themselves, or incautiously made, so that "there may be more honor in the breach, than in the observance of them." Not so the engagements of Heaven; they are all the product of that holy and wise mind which

cannot err, and need not change. "He is of one mind, and what his soul desireth, that doeth he; he performeth the thing that is appointed for me." Job xxiii. 13, 14.

4. *The faithfulness of God is the result of his wisdom.* Among men, the non-performance of promises is frequently occasioned by circumstances which human prudence could not foresee, nor provide against; and therefore good men should not make promises hastily, and never without (at least a *mental*) reference to St. James's caution,—“Ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that.” But no provisoes are necessary when God makes a promise; he has a perfect foreknowledge of every future event, however distant; he knows the end from the beginning, and perceives the connexion of all things, though apparently trifling and casual, all which, instead of defeating his purpose, shall conspire to accomplish it. No difficulties, no disappointments, can occur to him; his instruments are always at hand, and willingly or unwillingly, knowingly or ignorantly, they shall all subserve his holy designs. This affords no small encouragement to a reliance on his faithfulness.

5. The faithfulness of God may be contemplated, as connected with his mercy, his love, and his goodness. The royal Psalmist puts them together (Ps. cxxxviii. 2.) “I will praise thy name for thy loving-kindness and for thy truth, for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.” His love inclines him to make the promise, and his veracity induces him to fulfil it: and it would be dishonorable to God to admit for a moment, the unjust supposition that he would disappoint the hope which his promise had excited: hence it is pleaded (Ps. cxix. 49,) “Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.” The word of promise is the ground of hope; and it is by the grace of God a believer is enabled to make it such, to depend upon it, and expect its fulfilment: and will He who kindled the holy desire, and filled the soul with hope of the promised blessing, disappoint that hope? It is impossible. The Christian may humbly, yet boldly, say with David, when he pleaded a divine promise (1 Chr. xvii. 23,) “Therefore, now, Lord, let the thing that thou hast spoken of concerning thy servant be established for ever, and *do as thou hast said.*” Mercy and truth have met together, and they shall never part. Mercy invites, and Truth receives the sinner. Mercy makes the promise, and Truth stands ready to fulfil it: and the union of

both shall call forth the Psalmist's song—“I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people; I will sing praises unto thee among the nations: for thy mercy is great above the heavens, and thy truth reacheth unto the skies.” Ps. cviii. 4, 5.

6. Another consideration may confirm our confidence in the faithfulness of God.—The promises are made *in, and to Christ*, as the head of his church; and faithfulness to him, as well as to us, insures their fulfilment. St. Paul declares, in 2 Cor. i. 26, “All the promises of God in him are Yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God, by us.” Jesus Christ is the Surety of the new covenant, and he is deeply concerned in the fulfilment of the promises, for they are made to him, and to his people, in and through him. The persons who shall finally be saved, are those of whom he says to the Father, “Thine they were, and thou gavest them me;” and again, “I in them, and they in me, that they may be made perfect in one;” he also says, “All that the Father giveth me, shall come unto me; and him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” John vi. 37. We also read of “the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began.” Titus i. 2. Was not this promise made to the eternal Son of God, and to and for believers in him, their covenant head, before the earliest date of time, and of which he gave a specimen in the first promise immediately after the fall of man? All the promises then being made to Christ, the Mediator, respecting both himself and his people, shall be punctually fulfilled, “to the praise of the glory of his grace.”

7. If any further consideration be needful to establish our faith in the faithfulness of God, let it be that wonderful condescension of his grace, whereby he is pleased to confirm his promise by an OATH. In this manner he was pleased to stoop to confirm the faith of Abraham when the promise of a numerous posterity, so contrary to human appearances, was made to him. So St. Paul relates the matter (Heb. vi. 13:) “When God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself,” saying, “Surely, blessing I will bless thee;” in the book of Genesis it is, “By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord,” (Gen. xxii. 16:) and in like manner he is pleased to deal with Christian believers, (Heb. vi. 17:) “God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath—that by *two* immutable things (in which it was

impossible for God to lie) *we* might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us"—that is, upon Christ." In this most marvellous manner does the God of Truth vouchsafe to antidote our fears, and put our unbelief to shame; by this double security does he encourage our hope, and constrain us to say, as in our text, "God is faithful."

8. In the last place, and, if possible, still further to satisfy the most incredulous mind, let us call in to our aid *the experience of the people of God in all ages*. And here, what a cloud of witnesses might we summon to give their evidence in support of, what ought never to have been questioned—the faithfulness of Jehovah!

The first promise that God was pleased to make to his apostate creature, related to the Savior, who, under the title of "the seed of the woman," was to "bruise the serpent's head," or, in other words, to "destroy the works of the devil." The fulfilment of this promise was deferred (we must not say delayed) for the long space of four thousand years; and then, "when the fullness of the time was come"—the proper, the appointed time, neither sooner nor later, "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman," to be a Redeemer. With eager longings of holy desire, many successive generations looked forward to this grand event; and when the moment arrived, fixed in the divine decree, the Savior appeared. Let us remember that there is nothing like distance of time in the mind of God, between the promise and its fulfilment; "a thousand years with him are as one day, and a single day is as a thousand years;" and hence some events are spoken of in the prophets as present, or even past, which are yet to come; for God knows nothing of past or future, all is one eternal *now*; and if he speak, it is done.

Was the universal flood threatened, and was Noah with his family to be secured? The event corresponded with the threatening, though 120 years intervened; and when that period of reprieve expired, "in the self-same day entered Noah into the ark." The world perished; Noah was preserved; and the word of the Lord, which cannot fail, was accomplished.

Was Abraham, when a hundred years of age, and childless, perhaps for fifty years after his marriage, to have one son, and descending from him, a vast posterity like the stars of heaven for multitude? Every thing like probability was against such an event; but Abraham had the fullest confidence in the power and faithfulness of Je-

hovah, and the promise was fulfilled; and every Jew we see is a witness of it.

Was Israel, long enslaved and depressed, to be freed from the Egyptian yoke? What though Pharaoh was proud and obstinate—what though, after a reluctant consent, he pursued the fugitives with a mighty army—what though rocks and mountains were on either hand, and the raging sea before them,—the promise could not fail! the sea retires at God's command; it forms a wall on each side of them, and they pass through its dry channel in perfect safety; immediately after which, the waves, obedient to their Maker, resume their place, and overwhelm, with tremendous destruction, the affrighted host of Egypt. Thus Israel was taught that "God is faithful."

Pass on with these distinguished people into the deserts of Arabia, and rather than the promise of God shall fail, behold them sustained for the greater part of forty years, with food daily rained down from Heaven, and their thirst assuaged with water flowing from the flinty rock! But how are they to dispossess seven mighty and warlike nations, whose fortified cities were "walled up to heaven," and in whose eyes they thought "themselves like grasshoppers?" The terror of God fell upon these bold warriors; the walls of Jericho fell flat before the Israelites; and the land of milk and honey became an easy conquest. The overflowing Jordan recedes, and opens a ready passage into the heart of the country, and then the faithfulness of God is thus proclaimed by his honored servant Joshua: "Ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof." Josh. xxiii. 14. Surely all the people would say, "God is faithful."

It would be easy to follow the Scripture history, and adduce a multitude of instances to the same effect, but our limits forbid, and these may serve as a sufficient specimen. We proceed to a practical

IMPROVEMENT.

1. FROM hence we may learn *the unreasonableness and sinfulness of unbelief*. Is the blessed God uniformly faithful to his word, whether of promise or threatening? What then is the crime of unbelief, but the denial of this—the denial of his truth and veracity—the charging him with falsehood? The apostle John, therefore, expressly says (1 John v. 10,) "He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar;"—

he who rejects the testimony of God in the Gospel, who denies that "God hath given us (believers) eternal life, and that this life is in his Son," (ver. 11,) charges the truth of God with a falsehood; and can any blasphemy be more criminal? Let the example of the ancient Israelites be a warning to the world; for "unto them was the Gospel (the good news) proclaimed"—the promise of the earthly Canaan; but not giving credit to the promise, God was offended, and "sware in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest;" "so then we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." Our wisdom, therefore, is to profit by their punishment, and to hear, with faith, the voice of God in his Gospel, "while it is called To-day;" for this is the solemn declaration of the God of truth: "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John iii. 36.

2. *Let God be honored in his faithfulness, by a suitable confidence in it.* The life of a Christian is a life of faith. God's faithfulness, and our faith, are relative terms. His promises are the ground of our faith. Faith has a constant regard to them; and our expectation of their fulfilment rests upon the faithfulness of God in performing them, and will generally be proportioned to our belief of that faithfulness. It is said of Sarah, the wife of Abraham, in reference to the long-promised heir, that "she judged him faithful who had promised;" that is, she did so *habitually*, though her faith, like that of most believers, sometimes fluctuated. "She judged him to be faithful," and therefore expected the promised blessing. This, then, is the point. Do we, or do we not, judge a promising God to be a faithful God? If we do, we shall experience some degree of "joy and peace in believing;" if we do not, doubts and fears will burden our minds, and cloud our prospects. By believing that God is faithful, we shall obtain peace, and in no other way. "Said I not unto thee," (that is, to Martha, at the grave of her brother Lazarus) "said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" And so the Lord speaks to us—If thou canst credit my testimony, rely on my promises, and trust my faithfulness to make them good to thee, thou shalt see my glory; thou shalt have my peace, which passeth understanding,

to keep thy heart and mind, while in this vale of tears; and thou shalt hereafter be with me where I am, behold my glory, and share in it for ever. Has not each of us reason to say, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief!"

Finally, Let us, in our humble measure, try to imitate the blessed God in this his glorious attribute; let us be "followers (imitators) of God as dear children;" let us imitate him in faithfulness. Even a heathen philosopher (Pythagoras,) when asked, "What makes men like God?" answered, "Their speaking the truth." Let not Christians be worse than heathens. Many, alas! called Christians are so! The wicked are in the constant habit of lying; "they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies," (Ps. lviii. 3,) and in this practice they resemble him who is "the father of lies;" and without repentance and pardon, all "liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." Rev. xxi. 8. But from this vain and wicked conversation every true believer is redeemed. God's children are described (Isa. lxiii. 8,) as lovers of truth:—"Surely, they are my people, children that will not lie." Let this be our character. Let us, as directed by the apostle, "speak every man truth with his neighbor." Above all, let the faithfulness of God to us, constrain us to be faithful to him. We are engaged by baptism, profession, and self-dedication, to be the Lord's; "let us, then, hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful who hath promised."

PRAYER.—O God of Truth, thou art without iniquity; just and right art thou. Thou art not a man that thou shouldest lie, nor the Son of man, that thou shouldest repent. Hast thou said, and shalt thou not do it? or hast thou spoken, and shalt thou not make it good? Lord, we believe; help thou our unbelief! All thy promises in Christ are Yea and Amen. In all ages thy people have experienced the truth of thy word; they trusted in thee, and were not ashamed; not one thing failed of all the good things which were spoken concerning them; all came to pass. And thou, O God, art unchangeably the same; we, therefore, would judge that thou art faithful, and humbly plead that thou wilt do as thou hast said, and fulfil to us, thy servants, the word on which thou hast caused us to hope. And to thee shall be praise and glory for thy truth and faithfulness, through eternal ages. Amen.

SERMON LXXVIII.

GOD, WITH ALL HIS PERFECTIONS, THE
CHRISTIAN'S GOD.

Psalm xlviii. 14. For this God is our God, for ever
and ever.

THE glorious perfections of Deity form the subject of the preceding discourses; in which, after an introductory discourse on the importance of the knowledge of God, we have made a feeble attempt to display the *power*, the *wisdom*, the *holiness*, the *justice*, the *omnipresence*, the *patience*, the *sovereignty*, the *goodness*, the *mercy*, the *love*, and the *faithfulness* of God; and now, what remains but to exult in this glorious Being, and to say in the triumphant language of the Psalmist, "This God is *our* God, for ever and ever!"

These words conclude a hymn of praise, composed, probably, on occasion of some eminent victory; but, undoubtedly applicable to the glories of the Gospel-church. The psalm begins with a declaration of the greatness of God; as he manifested himself in Sion. The situation of the temple, which was remarkably beautiful, afforded a suitable emblem of the Christian church, in which true happiness may certainly be found; there, the love of God in Christ is manifested and enjoyed, and there he presides for its infallible protection; and the Psalmist concludes with the words of our text, exulting in such a God, and in his interest in him, with the security it affords through life, to its termination. These words furnish us with a good conclusion to these discourses on the Divine Perfections, and it shall be our present business to prove that

It is the unspeakable privilege of believers, that God, in Christ, is their own God, and will be so for ever.

A pious Jew, in ancient times, looking on all the nations around him, and beholding the heathen bowing to their pretended gods of wood and stone, would pity their stupidity; but contemplating the God that made the heavens, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of Israel, glorious in holiness, venerable in praises, and doing wonders, would, with sacred joy, exclaim, "This God is our God!"—"great is *OUR* God above all gods!"

The believer in Christ enjoys this privilege also; for it is the grand blessing of the covenant of grace, as mentioned by St. Paul, in the eighth chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews (ver. 10 :) "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel," (that is, with the

church of Christ,) I will put my laws in their mind, and write them on their hearts, and *I will be to them a God*, and they shall be to me a people."

A covenant is either an *agreement* or an *appointment*. Covenant, in this place, signifies an *appointment*—a gracious appointment made by God himself, in behalf of all real Christians; the *New* covenant, in distinction from the *Old* covenant, made with the nation of Israel at Sinai, which consisted chiefly in precepts, prohibitions, and emblems of future blessings to be revealed in the gospel. This covenant was given by Moses, "but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." In the new covenant, or appointment, we have chiefly *PROMISES*—promises of all spiritual blessings, in and through Christ Jesus. One of these promises is "They shall all know me, from the least to the greatest," ver.

11. The importance of this blessing was shown in the Introductory Sermon; and the design of all the following discourses is to promote the knowledge of God, in all his glorious perfections; but the chief blessing of all is,—"*I will be their God.*" This comprehends all good things: it includes all that can be needed or desired; yea, infinitely more than "we can ask or think." We justly admire the perfections of God—what he *is*, in *himself*; but how much more admirable is it, to have a personal interest in him,—to know that he is all this to, and for, his people; so that they may boldly say, "This God is *our* God!"

But let it be observed, that it is only *in*, and *through Jesus Christ*, that he becomes *our God*. He does not transact with man *immediately*, but through a Mediator: "No man cometh to the Father but by him;" and through him, God the Father cometh to man. "God was *in Christ*, reconciling the world unto himself." Hence the name of the Savior is "IMMANUEL"—that is, "God with us." As Immanuel, he is God in our nature; God engaged in our behalf; and manifested for our salvation. Through faith in his blood, the sinner comes to God, and obtains the pardon of all his sins, which is another blessing of the covenant, mentioned in ver. 12, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." And by the influence of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in every believer, a separation from the world is effected, and a life of communion with God commenced, which shall never end; according to the promise recorded in 2 Cor. vi. 16, &c. "God hath

said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." Truly happy, then, are all believers in Christ; having come to God, through faith in him, they are divinely authorized to adopt the words of the text, "This God is our God!"

In ancient times, long before the brighter discoveries of the gospel were afforded, we find some eminent believers distinguished as having a special interest in God. Jehovah, who, by his sovereign grace, called Abraham from among the idolaters of Chaldea, was pleased to style himself "the God of Abraham." By this name he made himself known to Moses at the burning bush, when he was about to deliver the posterity of Abraham from their bondage in Egypt. He called himself also, at the same time, "the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exod. iii. 6;) and thus he encouraged the children of Israel to expect that the promises made to their fathers should certainly be accomplished.—In like manner, New Testament believers are more clearly taught to expect a future and eternal inheritance in Heaven; "wherefore, God is not ashamed to be called *their God*, for he hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. xi. 16:) as if it had been said, God would be ashamed to be called *their God*, if nothing more than the good things of this life were given them; especially as it is the lot of far the greater part of them to be poor and afflicted in the present world; but, having "prepared for them a city," a glorious habitation, even "a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; "he is not ashamed,—he thinks it no dishonor to be, and to be called *their God* and Father. "This," saith he, as if exulting in the relation, "this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations." Exod. ii. 15. God's relation to his people is what *he* will ever remember, let us then never forget it; never neglect to take the comfort, nor to give him the glory of it.—It is God's memorial; let it be ours.

We find Moses, the faithful servant of the Lord, glorying in his relation to God (Exod. xv. 2,) "The Lord is my strength and my song, and he is become my salvation; he is *my God*, and I will prepare him a habitation; my *father's God*, and I

will exalt him." As this was part of the song composed on occasion of the Israelites passing through the Red Sea, Moses may perhaps allude to the name of God, as "the God of Abraham;" such indeed he proved himself to be, to his posterity. Thrice happy is he who, celebrating a still greater salvation than that of Israel, can sing—"He is *my God*, and my *father's God*; I will exalt him!"

In the book of Psalms, we frequently meet with this sweet appropriation of the name of God. The Psalmist speaks thus—"Thou art my God, from my mother's womb;"—"I trusted in thee, I said, Thou art my God;"—"I will sing praise unto thee;"—"I will extol thee, my God, O King, and bless thy name for ever!"

Daniel, also, had good reason to own his relation to God, when the king, who had caused him to be thrown into the den of lions, asked, with a lamentable voice, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" The praying man of God replied, "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lion's mouth." Such was the impression produced by this exertion of divine power in behalf of the prophet, that Darius required that all his subjects "should tremble and fear before *the God of Daniel*."

We might multiply instances of this kind; but let us rather pass on, and show more particularly that the several attributes of the blessed God, which have been surveyed in the preceding sermons, afford abundant occasion to the believer to rejoice in his relation to Jehovah, and triumphantly to say, "This God is my God!"

Our God is *Almighty*. Is any thing, then, too hard for him? Whatever he hath promised he is able to perform; and he hath performed such wonders in the fulfilment of his promises to his ancient people the Jews, and to all his believing people ever since, that unbelief may blush to suspect he will ever fail to accomplish with his hand, what he hath spoken with his mouth. Remember his mighty works in the creation of the world; in the preservation and government of the world; and in his marvellous interposition in behalf of his people: the waters shall not drown, the sun shall not set, the fire shall not burn, lions shall not devour, when he forbids; and if he give the word of command, bread shall descend from Heaven, water shall flow from the rock, devouring birds shall feed the prophet, five loaves shall satisfy five thousand people, and the dead shall come forth from their graves. What

cannot he do for his friends? and should they not say, This God is our God; and, If God be for us, who can be against us?

Our God is **WISE**—he is Wisdom. What a privilege then is it to be under his direction! and this is the privilege of his people, as it follows immediately after the words of our text—"He will be our guide, even unto death;" he will direct our steps through this mazy wilderness, nor forsake us when we die, but conduct us safely through Jordan to the possession of the promised rest. Well may we "cast our cares upon him," if we believe that "he careth for us."

"Since all the downward tracts of time,
God's watchful eye surveys,
O! who so wise to choose our lot,
And regulate our ways?"

Our God is **HOLY**; unlike the pretended deities of the heathen, who were abominably impure, the patrons and patterns of infamous vices; so that we may say with exultation, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like unto thee, *glorious in holiness*?" A wicked man, wishing to indulge his sins, might wish that God were like himself, and would wink at his impurity; but a Christian rejoices in the holiness of God; it keeps him low in his own eyes; it makes him hunger and thirst after righteousness; and encourages the hope that his holy God will, by all his ordinances and all his dispensations, make him "a partaker of his holiness."

Our God is **JUST**. Shall he not then always do right? It is the glory of the Gospel, and that which renders it peculiarly satisfactory to the mind, that therein God has manifested his justice no less than his mercy—"he is just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." The Christian, then, has nothing to dread, but every thing to hope from this attribute. He who said to Abraham, on leaving his native land, "I am thy shield," said also, "I am thy exceeding great reward." Nothing can possibly be lost by adherence to Christ and his cause; God is not unrighteous, so that he should forget the work of faith and the labor of love; he that soweth to the spirit shall reap of the spirit; and God, the righteous Judge, will, at the great day, bestow the crown of righteousness on every one who was faithful unto death. How joyfully shall every conqueror, on receiving that crown, exult, This righteous God is my God!

Our God is **OMNIPRESENT**. Pleasing reflection to the Christian! Wherever he is, God is there,—in the closet, in the church,

in the world; at home, abroad; by sea or land; amongst friends or foes, Christians or Infidels; in prosperity or in adversity, God is there. The salutary thought bridle the unruly tongue, restrains the roivings of the eye, repels the intruding thoughts of sin, and quenches the fiery darts of temptation. It stills the rising murmur of impatience, corrects the mistakes of unbelief, and enables the soul to endure, "as seeing him who is invisible."

Our God is **PATIENT**. It is well for the world, it is well for *us*, that he is so. It was justly remarked, by an old divine, that if the most tender-hearted man in the world were to sit down on the throne of God, for a single hour, and behold, as God continually does, the provoking abominations committed by men during that hour, he would undoubtedly, in the next, set the world on fire and destroy it. "But he is God, and not man, therefore we are not consumed." Let us not abuse this amiable perfection by continuing in sin, but rejoice that this patient God is our God, and learn from him to be patient too.

Our God is **SOVEREIGN**; he doth as he pleaseth, among the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. Let us glorify him as such; even when we cannot account for his sovereign proceedings. Thus did the apostle Paul, when he had contemplated the calling of the Gentiles, and the rejection of the Jews, with their future restoration—"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! And how much reason has every believer to admire the divine sovereignty, for to this he ascribes his personal salvation. "By the grace of God I am what I am." He alone "made me to differ" from the most abandoned wretch on earth; O to grace how great a debtor am I! "bless thou the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name!"

Our God is **GOOD**, and doeth good. Well may man say so; man so highly favored in his structure, in the powers of his mind, in his superiority over the creatures, in his immortality, and above all, in his redemption by the Son of God. God is indeed in a vast variety of respects "good to all;" "his tender mercies are over all his works," and "the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord." O that men, O that *all* men, would praise the Lord for his goodness; but let them especially do so, who have a special interest in his favor; let them shout for joy, and say, This *good* God is *our* God, for ever and ever!

Our God is **MERCIFUL**.—"Mercy *belongeth* to him," it is his prerogative, his peculiar excellency, one of the brightest jewels of his crown; it is his delight, it is his glory. Now, every believer, like converted Saul of Tarsus, hath "obtained mercy;" and who can sufficiently prize it?—it is great mercy, rich mercy, free mercy, manifold mercy, matchless mercy, infinite mercy, yea, eternal mercy! O praise the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever! Well may the pardoned sinner cry, "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy." Micah, vii. 18.

Our God is **LOVE**. This is the most amazing perfection of all; the love of such a glorious and holy Being, to creatures so degraded and defiled by sin! Surveying this, we are astonished; and try, but in vain, to measure its vast dimensions—its breadth, its length, its depth, and its height; it surpasses, by infinite degrees, the most advanced knowledge of saints and angels; yet, in a sense, it is apprehended, it is enjoyed, it is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit; and then indeed the Christian may triumphantly cry, This God is my God, for ever and ever.

Our God is **FAITHFUL**. This crowns the whole. He is faithful to his promises; and his promises insure the final salvation of every believing soul. He has engaged never to "forsake the work of his own hands;" and, by putting "his fear in the hearts of his people," he has engaged that "they shall not forsake him." Hence, our text celebrates the permanence of the privilege enjoyed—"this God is our God—**FOR EVER and EVER**"—terms which in Scripture always signify that which is positively eternal. What a portion then is that of the believer! The landlord cannot say of his fields, These are mine for ever and ever. The king cannot say of his crown, This is mine for ever and ever. These possessions shall soon exchange masters; these possessors shall soon mingle with the dust, and even the graves they shall occupy, may not long be theirs; but it is the singular, the supreme happiness of every Christian to say, or to have a right to say, "This glorious God, with all his divine perfections, is my God, for ever and ever, and even death itself shall not separate me from his love."

IMPROVEMENT.

It may be truly said of the wicked—They have no God. They may have

wealth, and wit, and friends; but they are without God in the world; they are therefore miserably poor, and in the way to be miserable for ever. At present, you may contrive to fill up your fleeting moments with the business and pleasures of a transitory world, banishing God as far as you are able from your thoughts. Thus you may *live*; but how will you *die*? for die you must, and may die soon: and remember that after death comes the judgment. At the dread tribunal of God, what are you to expect? From which of his divine perfections can you hope to gain advantage? Perhaps you will say, From his mercy. But know this, that it is not at the bar of judgment that mercy is to be dispensed. *This* is the world, *this* is the time, for Mercy; and if not now sought, through Jesus Christ, it will be refused when sought hereafter. O seek it now! Delay is dangerous; it may be fatal. You have not a moment to lose. Lament your neglect of God hitherto, and cry with all your might, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" for how tremendous would be your state, if you should see all the people of God around the throne, shouting, "This God is our God, for ever and ever," while you, justly banished to an awful distance, and doomed to eternal darkness, must be constrained to say, Alas! alas! this God is not my God, nor will be mine for ever and ever. May divine grace prevent so horrid a condition!

And now, methinks, every serious person present will be putting this question to his own conscience, Is this blessed privilege mine? May I say, This God is my God?

I answer, Do you consider this as the most desirable of all good things?—do you prefer it, infinitely prefer it? Compared with this, do wealth and pleasure, friends and relations, the whole world, appear a trifle? Can you adopt the words of the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside (or in comparison of) thee?" If you see the value of having God as yours, this will be your deliberate language.

Wishing that God may be yours, do you come to him, in the only way that you can come, through faith in Jesus Christ? and thus coming, can you, and do you, renounce the idol of self-righteousness, accounting all things but loss that you may be accepted in Christ? Do you *yield* yourself to him,—gladly forsaking your vain companions, and sinful pleasures, and willing to part with the world for his sake?—for you cannot have *two* gods; you cannot serve

God and Mammon. Do you give up soul, body, and spirit to him, as your reasonable service, determined, by divine grace, to serve him faithfully, and follow him fully, all your days? to *obey* him as your God? to *submit* to him as your God? to *love* him, and to *glorify* him, as your God? If so, you may be permitted to say, and you will say it most humbly and thankfully, "This God is my God." Happy the man that is in such a state! happy is he who hath the Lord for his God, whose hope the Lord is! Happy Christian, thou art indeed "rich, and increased in goods, and standest in need of nothing" more to make thee happy. *Divine Power* protects thee, *Wisdom* guides thee, *Holiness* sanctifies thee, *Justice* secures thee, *Omnipresence* surrounds thee, *Patience* will not be provoked at thee, *Sovereignty* hath chosen thee, *Goodness* enricheth thee, *Mercy* forgives thee, *Love* delights in thee, and *Faithfulness* will conduct thee safely to Heaven, and place the crown of glory on thine head. Then, amidst ten thousand saints and angels, thou shalt exult in the matchless privilege, and say, "This God is my God, and he will never cease to be mine! This God is my God, for ever, and ever, and ever!" Amen and Amen.

PRAYER.—GLORIOUS God, when we contemplate thy Divine perfections, we are filled with admiration; but when we consider the great promise of the new covenant, that thou wilt be our God, and that we shall be thy people, we are beyond measure astonished. And will God in very deed condescend to be our God? Wilt thou write thy laws in our minds? wilt thou walk in us, and dwell with us? be merciful to our unrighteousness, and remember our sins no more? O Lord, fulfil to us all these precious promises. Let thy power protect us, thy wisdom conduct us, thy holiness sanctify us, thy justice secure us, thy omnipresence surround us, thy patience bear with us, thy sovereignty rule us, thy goodness enrich us, thy mercy forgive us, thy love delight us, and thy faithfulness crown the whole, in our final eternal salvation. O God, what can we render unto thee for benefits so vast, so unspeakable? We yield ourselves, body, soul, and spirit to thee; desiring to adore, obey, and glorify thee as our God, and to say from our hearts, Whom have we in Heaven but thee, and there is none on earth we desire besides thee; this God is our God for ever and ever: thou wilt be our guide, even unto death! Amen and Amen.

SERMON LXXIX.

JESUS CHRIST, AN INCOMPARABLE TEACHER.

John vii. 46. Never man spake like this man.

"THE tongue is a little member, but it boasteth great things;" and indeed, great

things have been effected by it. Orators, generals, advocates, senators, and preachers, have produced wonders by their speeches; but the greatest and best of them all is not to be compared with him of whom the words of our text were, in an ecstasy of admiration, spoken.

The pharisees and chief priests, who had determined to reject all the evidence that Jesus gave of his divine mission, alarmed at his growing popularity, took measures to apprehend and silence him. Many people, it appears, had already believed on him, and were suitably impressed with the wonders he had wrought, so that they openly said, "When Messiah cometh, will he do more miracles than this man hath done?" The rulers therefore determined upon making him their prisoner, sent officers to take him, and were waiting with the expectation of gratifying their malice by seeing him arraigned at their bar. But how were they disappointed, when the officers returned without their expected prisoner! and when asked why they had not brought him, they answered, in the words of the text, *Never man spake like this man!* What could have been more honorable to the character of our Lord than this report? Plutarch mentions it as a memorable proof of the extraordinary eloquence of Mark Antony, when soldiers were sent to kill him, that he pleaded for his life in such affecting language, that he totally disarmed them of their resolution, and melted them into tears. But these officers are vanquished, not by the forcible arguments of a man pleading for his life, but by hearing one of the ordinary discourses of our Lord, not particularly directed to them, but to the people at large, which is a circumstance much more remarkable. They returned to their employers in amazement, and without attempting an apology for their failure, they broke out into the pathetic language of the text, *Never man spake like this man!*

The observation they made upon our Lord's discourse was certainly just, and imported more than they were aware of, and what we are better able than they were to express. They heard him but once, and that perhaps not for an hour: but how many of his discourses, committed to writing by men inspired of God, and handed down to us, have we read and heard: and if we heard them with understanding, and mixed them with faith, we have much more reason than they had to say, *Never man spake like this man!*

In order that we may more fully per-

ceive the reason of this, and learn still more highly to prize his heavenly teaching, let us consider and illustrate the following observation :

Jesus Christ is incomparably the greatest and best teacher the world ever knew.

It is fit and becoming, "that in all things He may have the pre-eminence;" for he is the first and the last; the Almighty. In every character that he assumes, which, for the sake of our feeble minds, is compared to something human, he discovers infinite superiority, for he is the source of all that is excellent and admirable in the best of those human characters to which he condescends to be compared : and well may it be allowed that he spake as never man spake, who himself made man's mouth, endowed him with the admirable faculty of speech, and who furnished the finest orators in the world with all their most brilliant talents.

Is he, for instance, a King?—Yes, he is "the King of kings, and the Lord of lords," and his kingdom ruleth over all; his reign is the most pacific; his subjects are the most happy; his government the most equitable; his influence the most extended; and his kingdom that which shall never have an end.

Is he a Priest?—Yes; but far greater than Aaron. Jesus offered a sacrifice, but it was only once, it was once for all; a sacrifice, that needed no repetition, like that of ordinary priests, but it was at once a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, not for Jews only, but for all of every country and in every age who shall believe on him.

Is he a Prophet?—Yes; and such a one as the world never before heard. "God, at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the ordinary prophets," and among them, we highly venerate the names of Moses and Abraham, Isaiah and Elijah, and John. But a greater than any of these is here; and if we regard this holy prophet aright, we shall have good cause to say, Never man spake like this man! And this will plainly appear if you consider three things.

The Matter—the Manner—and the Effect of his Instructions.

Let us first consider the *Matter* of his instructions.—What was it that he taught? And here we shall find none of that wretched trifling, which distinguished the scribes, and pharisees, and rabbies, among the Jews, some specimens of which our Lord has given in order to expose them.—No, our Lord's discourses were grave, solid, and of eternal moment; for instance,

He truly revealed the divine character.—He who was from eternity "in the bosom of the Father," and had an intimate acquaintance with the whole mind and will of God, "he hath revealed him; he hath manifested the divine name and nature to the men who were given him out of the world," and qualified them to be the instructors of mankind. Doubtless there is more of the true knowledge of God displayed in one single discourse of our divine Redeemer, than in all the volumes composed by heathen sages.

Again, He fully explained the Will of God, as revealed, long before, in the moral law. In the ten commandments, we have the will of God in epitome—we have "the root of the matter;" but in the discourses of Christ, we have the spiritual meaning and extent of the law—we have the lofty tree with all its extended branches. The Jews had the law, but it was miserably expounded to them by their teachers, who not only dwelt chiefly on its outward rites and ceremonies, neglecting the weightier matters, but by their wretched traditions set aside the design of it. With what authority did our Lord correct these dangerous mistakes, and point out the true and spiritual meaning of the law, particularly in his Sermon on the Mount! We find him also insisting upon the spiritual nature of that worship which God requires, and which alone he will accept. He showed that it was not merely worshipping in the holy place at Jerusalem, nor the mere use of divinely appointed means, but that God, who is a Spirit, must be worshipped in spirit and in truth; that the washing of the outside of the cup and the platter was of little moment: he insisted upon the religion of the heart; he showed the necessity of private prayer, of closet devotion, and of a purity of motive in all our religious actions; he showed that the kingdom of heaven came not with observation and outward show, as the Jews expected, but that it was of an *internal* nature, and consisted in peace and righteousness and joy in the Holy Ghost; he showed men that love is the very essence of true religion—love to God and love to man; and how admirable were our Lord's precepts with regard to the love of our neighbor! In his parable of the good Samaritan, he shows that we ought even to treat our enemies with kindness, and melt them down by acts of friendship.

But especially did the superiority of our Lord's preaching appear in the display he made of the divine mercy, of the love of God to sinful men, in the gift of his only-begotten Son, who came into our world to die

for them! With what heart-cheering words did he open his commission at Nazareth, saying "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." The prophets usually came to men with heavy tidings, called, The burden of the Lord, denouncing curses upon the disobedient; but our blessed Lord opened his mouth with blessings upon the poor, the meek, the mourners, the pure in heart, and even on those who were persecuted for righteousness' sake—characters far from being generally deemed happy: and how divinely sweet and consolatory were the gracious sayings that dropped from his lips—such as "the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost,"—"the Son of man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many"—"Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—"If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink."

Again, Jesus unveiled the invisible and eternal world. Hitherto little had been disclosed. The patriarchs indeed sought a better country than Canaan—a heavenly world, yet they were not favored with such a discovery of its excellencies and glories as was made by the mouth of Jesus, who came down from heaven on purpose to direct men thither. By him the immortality of the soul was fully and plainly asserted. "Fear not them," said he, "who can kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both the soul and body in hell." He plainly taught the nature of the future world, and the existence of the soul in a separate state from the body, as when he said to the penitent thief on the cross, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." He taught the final separation of those characters who are united in the visible church—the wheat and the tares—the good and bad fishes—the wise and the foolish virgins, a separation of whom shall be made in the great day. But,

II. The superiority of our Lord's instruction appears in the *Manner*, as well as in the matter of it.

He taught more clearly than any one who had gone before him. The Gospel truths which were revealed in the Old Testament were described as "shadows of good things to come," but the body is Christ. The writings of the prophets are

frequently obscure, for they themselves were imperfectly acquainted with the import of their own prophecies; but our Lord's teaching was like a morning without clouds, like the rising of the sun, with healing in his wings. The light of the Gospel broke through the obscurity of the law. How sweetly familiar were the instructions of our Lord in parables! in the manner of fables, he conveyed the great truths of religion—a pleasing mode of instruction, well adapted to both classes of his hearers; for the teachable easily perceived the drift of his discourses, or if they knew it not, they humbly asked to be informed; while those proud opposers, who only sought to cavil, found enough to become stumbling-blocks to their own ruin. You remember our Lord's parable of the sower, to show the different effects of the preached word, and his setting a little child in the midst of his disciples to teach them humility.

Our Lord's teaching was also distinguished by the mild and affectionate manner of it. Indeed, he courts the attention of his disciples upon this ground. "Learn of me," says he, "for I am meek and lowly in heart,"—no forbidding—no philosophic or priestly haughtiness, but waiting to be gracious, and willing to diffuse knowledge; he was indulgent in all his behavior, even to his dull disciples, and gentle to his bitterest enemies. Paul speaks of "the gentleness of Christ," and "the bowels of Christ." How pathetic were his lamentations over Jerusalem! and how charming his farewell discourse to his disciples!

Again, our Lord taught the people *faithfully*. He honestly told his disciples what they were to expect if they became his followers—that they must deny themselves, and take up their cross; that they would not, perhaps have accommodation equal to the foxes of the wilderness, or the birds of the air; but they must look for divisions and discord, and evil speaking; yea, for death itself. He also plainly forewarned men of their danger; he boldly exposed the ignorance and hypocrisy of the Pharisees; he warned men against them as the blind leaders of the blind, lest both should fall into the ditch.

How *zealous* also was our Lord in giving these instructions! he was like a man in earnest, who felt the importance of what he taught. "The zeal of thine house," says he, "hath eaten me up—hath even consumed me!" insomuch that his own relatives suspected his sanity, and intimated that he was beside himself.

Observe also how *majestically* he spoke. Never man before could speak like him.

Even the common people observed that he spoke with authority, and not as the scribes. The dignity of his manner, and the weight of his discourses, constrained his hearers to say, Never man spake like this man! And this will appear still more clearly, when we consider,

III. *The grand effect of his teaching.*

He who spoke on earth in this astonishing manner, was no less a person than he who said, at the creation of the world, "Let there be light, and there was light." Powerful was the effect of our Lord's word on things inanimate. When the tempestuous winds fiercely raged, and the waves of the sea threatened instant destruction, it was only for him to say, "Peace, be still," and there was a great calm.

Demons, who at that time obtained permission to possess the bodies of men, and grievously tormented them, were banished with a single word, and the poor demoniacs were found sitting at his feet in their right mind.

And with respect to men—what power accompanied his words! Did he command the fishermen of Galilee to forsake their nets and their boats, or did he command the wealthy publican to leave the receipt of custom, they instantly comply, forsake all their occupations and possessions, and immediately join his humble train. Did atrocious sinners mingle with the multitude who flocked to hear him preach, one word from our Lord, spoken to their hearts, changed them in a moment. She who had had been an atrocious sinner, a person of notorious character, follows Jesus even into the house of a Pharisee, bedewing his feet with the tears of penitence, and wiping them with the hair of her head! Zaccheus, before an extortioner, hears Jesus invite himself to his house, receives him gladly, and, changed by his grace, immediately became another man. Who but Jesus could have dared to say to a weeping penitent, "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee?" Can any forgive sins but God only?

And still his word (and the preached Gospel is his word) produces, by the power of the Holy Spirit, similar effects. For what purpose was the Gospel ordained? "To open men's eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and to translate them from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in him." Our Lord declares what should be the grand effect and influence of his Gospel; "The hour cometh," saith he, "and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of

the Son of God, and live." And thus it proved to the Ephesians; they were originally "dead in trespasses and sins," but they were "quickened" by the word of the Lord Jesus. So it was with the Corinthians: they had been wallowing in every sort of vice, but "they were washed, they were justified, they were sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints;" they became new creatures—old things passed away—all became new.

St. Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, chapter the 14th, verse the 24th, describes the manner in which this great change was in the primitive times frequently effected. Speaking of the religious assemblies of the first Christians, where the word of the Gospel was preached—"there cometh in one," saith he, "that believeth not, or one unlearned"—ignorant of Christ and the Gospel, and "he is convinced of all; he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so, falling down on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is with you of a truth;"—the person described, came in, it may be, as a spy, or merely to mock at what he might hear; but, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the word touches his heart; he is convinced of his sin and danger; he renounces his former idolatry; becomes a spiritual worshipper of the true God; and is convinced, from what he feels, that the people, whom before he despised, are indeed the people of God, and that his presence is among them.

The power that produces this conviction, and this mental revolution, is and must be divine, and St. Paul ascribes it to the same creative voice, which at the beginning said, "Let there be light, and light there was." Speaking to the same church of the Corinthians (2d Epistle, ch. 4. ver. 6,) he says, "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." What a grand idea does this give of the power of divine grace on the souls of men! It is the voice of him that spake the most glorious creatures into being, that speaks to the heart, and bids the light of the Gospel enter. It is Jesus, by whom all things were originally made, and without whom nothing was made, who is the author of the new creation in the soul of man: and, blessed be God, the same effects are still produced, though rarely so suddenly and so visibly, yet as really and truly by the ministry of the Gospel of Christ, of which, we trust, there

are amongst us more than a few living witnesses.

To conclude. What has been said, may, we trust, excite our admiration, and constrain us to use the language of the text, Never man spake like this man! But this is not enough; let us be anxious to hear him ourselves; each of us for himself to receive his word. It will little avail us to know, that nearly 1800 years ago a distinguished person spake as never man spake, unless we know that we have heard his voice and have believed in his name. For, be it observed, that still Christ speaketh to us, according to Hebrews xii. 25, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh, for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, how much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh *from heaven*, whose voice then shook the earth? but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also the heavens."

When our Lord made his appearance on earth, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, *hear ye him!*" And again, "This is the Prophet that God promised to raise up, *hear him*; and it shall come to pass, that if any one will not hear that prophet, he shall be cut off from among the people."—Doubtless Christ still speaks to us by his blessed word; let us then beware of the sin and danger of rejecting him, for as it is written in the 12th chapter of St. John's Gospel, and the 48th verse, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my word, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

It is, on the other hand, the distinguishing character of all true disciples, that they affectionately and practically attend to the voice of Christ. Our Lord says, in the 10th chapter of St. John's Gospel, verse 27th, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me;" and in the 3d and 4th verses of that chapter, speaking of himself as the shepherd, he says, "The sheep hear his voice, and he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice, and a stranger they will not follow;" but they follow the Lamb, whithersoever he goeth. Let us then, my friends, like Mary, whom he so highly commended, take our station at his feet, and thus choose, like her, the good part, which shall not be taken from us; and should we be tempted to withdraw from him, let us still cleave to him with purpose of heart, and repel every temptation to forsake this divine teacher,

saying with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go," (if we forsake thee) "for thou," and thou only, "hast the words of eternal life."

Finally. How glorious will be the voice of Jesus at the last day, when the Lord Jesus being revealed from heaven, when all mankind shall be roused by his voice, the voice of the Archangel, and the trump of God, when all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and come forth, attend his bar, and receive their doom! Then may it be our happiness to hear, from his own blessed lips, that delightful sentence, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world. Amen.

PRAYER.—We praise thee, O Lord, that thou hast manifested thyself in Christ, not only that our sins might be forgiven, but that we might be made wise unto salvation. To know thee, the true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent, is everlasting life. Thy works around us, and thy dealing with us, would leave us, and all mankind, without excuse, for ignorance of thee; but we bless thee that thou hast moreover revealed thy will by the prophets of old; and in the fullness of time, by thine only Son, who alone completely knew thee, and therefore could fully make thee known to us. Accept our thanksgivings, that thou hast recorded his doctrines, his actions, his sufferings, and his glory, for our instruction, to the end of the world. We praise thee, that thy word is so bountifully put into our hands, is read and explained to us, and is urged upon our attention and our affections. Save us, O Lord, from shutting our eyes, lest we should see;—from stopping our ears, lest we should hear; and hardening our hearts, lest we should be converted, and thou shouldst heal us! Grant us, O Lord, the teaching of thy Holy Spirit, which thou hast promised to them who ask thee; and work in us, both to will and to do what thou teachest us, for the sake of Jesus, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON LXXX.

CHRIST THE GREAT PHYSICIAN.

Matt. ix. 12. But when he heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not the physician, but they that are sick.

THE Scriptures of truth uniformly represent Jesus Christ as the supreme object of every believer's love, as being "precious to every one that believeth"—"the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely." He is described as "the pearl of great price," to obtain which the spiritual merchant gladly parts with all that he is worth; and St. Paul goes so far as to say, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed." But, is the

Savior thus highly esteemed by all who profess and call themselves Christians? Is the Gospel of his grace, his righteousness, his salvation, supremely prized by all who are called by his name? Alas! it is far otherwise. Like Gallio of old, many "care for none of these things;" and others satisfy themselves with an occasional and careless attention to them. Like Pilate, they "find no fault in the man," but their hearts are engaged in the pursuits and enjoyments of the present world, and they "mind only earthly things." How shall we account for this? How is it that any, with the Scriptures in their hands, should thus forsake their own mercies, and lightly esteem the Rock of their salvation? The text resolves the difficulty. Here we find an answer—"The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." It is obvious to all, that a man in perfect health, who feels no pain, and is conscious of no disease, will not employ a physician. Whatever reports he may have heard respecting him, or whatever opinion he may entertain of his skill, he sees no present occasion for his assistance: and this was the condition of the Pharisees while our Lord was upon earth. He came "to seek and to save that which was lost;" and in the pursuit of this benevolent object, he disdained not freely to converse with publicans and sinners: not that he meant to countenance their sins; no; he mingled with them only to reclaim them, just as physicians go among the diseased merely to effect their cure. But this gave great offence to the proud Pharisees—men "who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." They complained of his conduct to his disciples, saying, "Your master keeps company, and eats and drinks with publicans and sinners;" but "Wisdom is justified of her children." Our Lord, in the text, vindicates his own conduct, while he accounts for that of the Pharisees: "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."—These men are insensible of the state of their own souls, while others were rejoicing that they had found a remedy.

These words may teach us the four following things:

First—That sin is the disease of the soul.

Secondly—Jesus is the great physician.

Thirdly—Those who are insensible of their sins, neglect him.

Fourthly—Those who know their true condition, are very desirous of his help.

In the first place, we are taught that sin is the disease of the soul. We brought it

into the world with us, deriving it from our first parents; for "by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." It is with strict propriety that sin is thus described, for it has just the same effects upon the soul that disease has upon the body. Sickness destroys all our powers of action, and deprives us of ability to transact our affairs, however important and urgent they may be: whatever dangers we might avoid, whatever advantages we might obtain, there is a total inability for action; and thus it is with the soul. We have before us a vast eternity, and this is the only season for preparation; it is the seed-time of eternity; we are now called upon to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling;" but while this sickness prevails, we have no heart to engage in this great work; we cannot bear the thought of necessary exertion. Even the ordinary means of grace are frequently neglected; the Bible, and prayer, and Sabbaths, and sermons, are shunned; for the sinner has no heart to them.

Sickness deprives a man of rest; he cannot be composed: he feels a constant uneasiness, an insatiable thirst: and thus, as the Scripture saith, "There is no peace to the wicked;" he turns from creature to creature, seeking rest and finding none; the world disappoints him; he meets with repeated and perpetual difficulties; this perhaps irritates his temper, and makes him a burden to himself and others; to get rid of his cares, he flies to amusements and intemperance; but the disease, instead of being relieved, is aggravated, and he grows worse and worse.

Disease frequently occasions delirium. A sick man knows not where he is, or what he says; when he is at death's door, he fancies himself perfectly well, and if not prevented, would be in danger of destroying himself. Thus a man in a state of sin is furiously bent on his own ruin; he will not be persuaded there is any danger in his case; and he is very angry with the servants of Christ who would convince him of his error. Solomon says, "The heart of the sons of men is fully set to do evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead." How do such persons fondly imagine that their hearts are good, even while their ways are perverse and desperately wicked!

Sin deforms the body. "When God with rebukes correcteth man for his iniquity, he maketh his beauty to consume like a moth;"—"He changeth his countenance, and sendeth him away." The finest face may be soon disfigured, and the

most lovely person become lothesome; but, in the sight of God, nothing is so beautiful as holiness, nothing so lothesome as sin.

Finally, disease is the forerunner of death.—Many diseases are mortal in their tendency, and if not seasonably checked, will bring the patient to the grave. Some diseases baffle the skill of the ablest physician.—Sin, which is the disease of the soul, is certainly mortal, if Christ the great physician does not interpose: “Death was the original threatening, to keep man from sin.” God said to Adam, “In the day that thou eatest” of the forbidden fruit, “thou shalt surely die;” and die he did; his body became mortal; and though he had a long reprieve, he returned at length to the dust from whence he came. But he immediately suffered a moral death; he became “dead in trespasses and sins,” and liable to the bitter pains of eternal death. And thus, “by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation.” This is our state: we are, universally, dead in sin; we have bodies doomed to the grave, and souls exposed to the just anger of an offended God. This is indeed a miserable state; but it would be far more so, if there were no remedy. “Is there then no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there?” Blessed be God, we can, with confidence, say, There is a physician, and he no less a person than the Son of God; and this is what we propose,

In the second place, to notice—That Jesus Christ is the great Physician. There is none upon earth equal to the cure of the souls of men, but the Son of God; he pitied us in our low estate; he saw us perishing in our sins and in our blood; and he left his throne of glory—visited this sinful globe—took our nature into union with his own; yea, he “himself took upon him our infirmities; he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted; but he was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.”—When on earth he gave many gracious specimens of his power to heal the *souls* of men, by healing their bodies; and such was his power, that “all manner of diseases,”—“every sickness and every disease” among the people was healed; yea, such was the compassion of our blessed Lord, that of all the numerous crowds of sick and afflicted people who applied to him, not one of them was sent away without relief.

In the cure of our souls two things are

necessary: we are guilty, and must be justified; we are polluted, and must be sanctified: he performs both these parts of our cure; which is intimated by the expression, that out of his side came water and blood. See the 1st Epistle of John, 5th chapter, and 6th verse, “This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood.” So that this may encourage us to apply to him, and say,

“Be of sin the double cure—

“Cleanse us from its guilt and power.”

Seeing, then, there is such a great and able Physician, may we not ask, “Why is not the hurt of the daughter of my people healed?” This leads us,

In the third place, to observe that men generally are too insensible of their sins, to apply to Christ; “the whole need not a physician;” it is the worst symptom of the disease of sin, that men are totally insensible of it, or think themselves so slightly diseased, that they are in no danger; and, at all events, that the future season will be time enough. Sin destroys all our faculties; it blinds the eyes of our understanding, and deadens the feelings of our hearts; the mind is so darkened, that it does not behold sin as it is, and dreadful mistakes prevail, respecting its true and dangerous nature. Let us endeavor to detect some of these.

Some of these fatal mistakes among men arise from ignorance of the holy law. If sin be “the transgression of the law,” we ought to consider, what are the demands of that law; and we shall find it requires perfect obedience to the will of God, and that, flowing from perfect love to him; it requires also that we should love our neighbor, in all instances, as ourselves. Now; while men are ignorant of this holy law, they discover no disease; but when, as in the case of St. Paul, the commandment comes, with a powerful conviction of its spiritual nature, unsatisfied demands, and fearful curse, then, like him, they are ready to die.

Another mistake respects the depravity of our natures. Of this most men are ignorant. “God made man upright, but he hath sought out many inventions.” Man is now an apostate creature, and it may be said of him, in all his faculties, as was said of Israel, in all the branches of her civil and ecclesiastical estate, “the whole head is sick, the heart is faint.”

Another dangerous mistake respects their opinion of their own goodness. How many persons fancy they have good hearts,

good desires, good intentions; they mean, they say, no harm, they do none to any man, even while they are living in open rebellion against God, and in the total neglect both of his law and of his gospel. Thus it is that men deceive themselves; they are "whole" in their own esteem, and are angry with those who would convince them of their danger, though with the friendly design of their obtaining a cure. Others will admit that all is not quite right; they cannot say they are in perfect health, but they see no occasion to be alarmed; they are not worse than others: besides, say they, God is very merciful, and he will not deal with his creatures severely; and if they should come short at last, the merits of Christ will make up the deficiency; besides, they design to reform and repent, at some future period. Now all this discovers a dreadful degree of ignorance; they are strangers to themselves, and to the nature of that gospel, which, take it in which view you please, always supposes that man is in a fallen, dangerous situation. And hence it has justly been called "the religion of a sinner;" hence too we find, that men have "followed after the law of righteousness, but they did not attain unto it:" the reason was, "they sought it not by faith, but by the works of the law." Rom. x.

Take a view of the Gospel itself for a few moments, and you will see that the Gospel supposes the condition of man to be not that of one who is whole, but who is exceedingly diseased. Why is the love of God in giving his Son spoken of as amazing love, as transcending all manner of conception?—"God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son;" and for what end? That men "*might not perish*," as they must have done but for this marvellous provision of love, but "that they might have everlasting life." Again, the love of *Jesus Christ* is spoken of as the most extraordinary thing in the world, and as absolutely necessary for the salvation of man—that one must die for the people—"the just for the unjust." Our case must have been remediless without him, and his death is represented as being the sole foundation of our hope; so that to depend upon any thing else is, in effect, to frustrate the grace, and to say that "Christ died in vain."—Again, Take a view of the offices of our dear Redeemer, and what do they imply? Is he a prophet? Then we were ignorant creatures, and needed his instructions.—Is he a priest? Then we were guilty, and wanted his sacrifice.—Is he a king? Then we were

feeble and weak, and unable to defend or rule ourselves. Look at all the operations of the Holy Spirit, and they speak the same language, and while they hold out to us the divine and only remedy, they imply strongly our wretched state. Now all those that are ignorant of this, neglect to apply to the Lord Jesus Christ; but some acquaintance with it is found in all those who resort to him for relief—such as, in our text, are described as "sick." This leads us,

In the fourth place, to observe, that those who know their true condition will gladly apply to Jesus Christ as their physician. For the eyes of their understandings are enlightened; they see the law of God in its spiritual nature and extensive requirements; they perceive the fearful consequences of its violation, for "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." Further, their heart is softened, the heart of stone is taken away, and God has given them a feeling heart of flesh; the conscience is quickened; convinced, it may be, at first, of some one particular and flagrant transgression; but they are led back in painful reflection on the whole of their past lives, recollecting long-forgotten sins, and tracing them to the sad source of all—Original Sin. Hence earnest desires and sincere prayers are offered for relief. "What shall I do to be saved?" is the anxious inquiry. "Behold he prayeth!" is the observation that every one makes upon the returning sinner; then, indeed, the soul applies in earnest to the Gospel of the grace of Jesus, and the Gospel displays his ability to heal; it shows us that Jesus is possessed of almighty power; it shows that he possesses the same power that created and supports the world. The Gospel also displays the loving heart of the compassionate Redeemer; it records also the wonderful cures he has already performed, and which are left upon record for this reason, that in all future ages great sinners may be encouraged to repent; then the soul looks up to him, as the Israelites looked to the brazen serpent in the wilderness, when stung by the fiery serpents, and ready to die of their wounds; and whoever thus looks to him shall be immediately healed; persuaded, fully persuaded both of his power and his grace, the soul finds health restored, and peace afforded to his guilty conscience.

I have now represented the case of all my hearers. In one of these two classes

each of you will be found. Is it in the first? Are you among the whole, who think they need not a physician? If so, you are under a great mistake, and a very dangerous mistake; which if not rectified, will prove fatal. Your present views of yourselves are at direct variance with the whole of the Bible. If you look to the *law*, that condemns you, because you have broken it; if you look to the *gospel*, that condemns you too, because you disregard its remedy. Whither then will you look, if neither the law nor the gospel can afford you relief?

You will perhaps say, Can I be sick without knowing it? Yes, you certainly may. Many are so, even as to their bodies: some very dangerous disease may be making a fatal progress before it is discovered; some sink into a lethargy, and feel nothing; others are delirious; and it is no uncommon thing for persons to be seriously diseased while they imagine that all is well, and that there is no danger. O, my friends, sin, as we have already shown, miserably perverts the judgment, and hides from men their true condition. Sinners are frequently, like many consumptive patients, who fancy, to the very last, that they are getting better and better, when there is but a step between them and death. O, believe the divine testimony. The word of God is true, and shows you your true condition; and while it points out your danger, kindly directs you to the true remedy. The infatuation of many persons on this point is truly lamentable. If their bodies be disordered in the slightest degree, they are sensible of it, and perhaps greatly alarmed; but their minds are so blinded, their consciences are so stupified, and they are so deluded by the tempter, that they will not believe, nor bear to be told of, their sickness and danger. May God enlighten your minds, soften your hearts, and fix upon your consciences such a deep and lasting conviction of your malady, that you may in good earnest cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

But, doubtless, I speak to others who are convinced of their disease, and such are apt to be dejected, and tempted to despair. The deceiver says, There is no help for you in God; your case is peculiar; there never was one so bad, and it is in vain for you to look for recovery. But observe, Jesus is mighty—almighty to save. Mark the words; "Able to save to the uttermost"—to the uttermost: and surely your case is not beyond the uttermost. You may object that sin greatly "abounds:"

True; but grace shall "much more abound;" and remember, that the Savior is-as willing as he is able to save. Recollect the cures he wrought upon earth. Numerous were the applications made to him, and, sometimes, rather unseasonably; but he never rejected them; he healed all who applied to him. May I not say, then, "Arise, for the Master calleth thee." You may say, He does not call me by name. Yes, he does: for is not your name *Sinner*? That is the name by which you are called; he calls you *as Sinners*. Christ declared that he came "to call, not the righteous, but sinners, to repentance"—that "he came to seek and to save that which was lost." Now this is your condition. He knows it is, and he has made you feel it; you are therefore the very person he came on purpose to heal. But, you are deeply dejected and broken-hearted. This is your character; well, "he healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds." Psalm cxlvii. 3. Yea, when he first opened his commission, and declared the design of his coming into the world, this was declared to be one of the offices he came to perform—"to bind up the broken-hearted, and to heal their wounds." Why then should you despair? Can you doubt the virtue of the remedy? or the love of the physician? or the sincerity of his offers? Be no more faithless, but believing. Take the remedy; believe its efficacy, and give him glory.

Some of you have received a cure. Gratefully acknowledge it to the glory of his name. You are not like some, mentioned in this chapter, who were prohibited from telling any man of it. No, you are commanded to blaze it abroad, and let the fame of Jesus be everywhere known. "Call, then, upon your soul, and all that is within you, to bless his holy name, who forgiveth all thy iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, who hath redeemed thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercy." Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, who have been thus graciously restored from the dreadful disease of sin. "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men." It is generally necessary for a person recovering from disease to be very cautious, for fear of a relapse. You live in a contagious world: you live in an hospital, where all are diseased. Shun the dangers which surround you, and avoid even the appearance of evil. Study to preserve your spiritual health. Let

him whose cure has been effected remember this—"Watch and pray, lest thou enter into temptation."

Finally, let us look forward with joyful hope to that happy world where sin is not known, or known only by recollection; where no inhabitant shall say, "I am sick," but where every one may and will say, I was "sick, nigh unto death," but the Lord had mercy on me, and healed me; now to my glorious Healer, even to "the Lamb in the midst of the throne, be glory and honor, world without end." Amen.

PRAYER.—MAY we worship thee, O Lord, in spirit; and call upon thee in truth! May we duly reflect on our real condition before thee, as polluted in our nature, depraved in our habits, guilty of wilful neglect and transgression of thy commands, fit only for endless misery, and every moment hastening to it, unless thou preventest us by thy grace, as revealed by Jesus Christ to the chief of sinners. Blessed be thy name, O Lord, who pardonest all our iniquities, and healest our desperate diseases. We have done the things that we need not, and ought not to have done, and have not done what we might, and ought to have done. In us there is no health: the head is sick, the heart is faint, the body is covered with putrefying sores. Lord, save us or we perish; we all perish, now, and for ever! Blessed be the Son of God, who, with infinite wisdom and compassion, came to save us when lost, by taking on himself the load of our infirmities; and bearing, together with these, the burden of our sins. Grant for his sake, O our heavenly Father, thy Holy Spirit to enlighten us, lest we close our eyes in everlasting death! that we may look to Jesus and be healed, to the praise of the glory of thy grace, world without end. Amen.

SERMON LXXXI.

FOLLOWING THE LORD FULLY.

Numbers xiv. 24. But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went, and his seed shall possess it.

It was well said by the prophet Elijah, to the people of Israel, when they "halted between two opinions," "If the Lord be God, follow him; but, if Baal, then follow him;" and thus may we say to persons who are lukewarm and irresolute in matters of religion, If the religion of the Gospel be true and divine, then profess and practise it with all your hearts; but, if you can prove it to be false, then abandon it altogether. We meet with many people, who are so far convinced of the necessity of being religious, that they pay some little, cold, occasional, external regard to it,

while their hearts are evidently attached to sin and to the world; but there are few, we fear, comparatively very few indeed, who are like Caleb, one of the princes of Israel, whose high commendation we have in the text, that he followed the Lord fully; and great was the honor that God put upon him for so doing.

When the children of Israel had left Egypt a few months, and had advanced towards the borders of the promised land, they desired Moses to send spies into it, to inquire whether its inhabitants were few or many, strong or weak; whether they dwelt in tents or in fortified cities, and whether the land was fertile or barren.—This motion arose entirely from their unbelief. God, who had brought them out of Egypt by a series of miracles, had repeatedly declared that the land flowed with milk and honey; and he had assured them, by solemn promises, that he would put them into possession of it: what need then was there for these inquiries? But God, to punish them for their unbelief, permitted the experiment to be made; and what was the result? Ten out of the twelve deputed surveyors, returned and reported that the land was indeed admirably good, and they produced fine specimens of its excellent fruits; but, said they, the people are very numerous, strong, and warlike; they dwell in highly walled and well fortified cities; and many of the soldiers are so gigantic in stature, that we seemed in their sight but mere grasshoppers. This evil report augmented their previous fears; and, forgetting the power and the promise of God, they mutinied, and determined to appoint a captain, in opposition to Moses, and go back again to Egypt and to slavery. Caleb and Joshua, who were faithful to God, in vain attempted to appease the people, by assuring them that warlike as the nations were, God, the only defence of nations, had forsaken them,—that Jehovah was with Israel, and that they should assuredly prevail. God, who is more displeased with unbelief than with any other crime, then declared in his wrath, that these rebels should never behold the country they had despised—that their carcasses should perish in the wilderness—but, that their children, headed by Joshua and his faithful friend, should joyfully possess the promised land. "My servant Caleb," says the text, "because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, will I bring into the land whereinto he went, and his seed shall possess it."

Doubtless these things are written for our admonition. The fate of the rebel-

lions Israelites, loudly bids us "fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it;" while it also powerfully invites us to imitate the example of the pious Caleb, that we too may receive the divine approbation.

The words of the text afford us the three following observations.

First. Real Christians are actuated by a spirit different from that of the world.—"Caleb had *another* spirit with him."

Secondly. Those who possess a right spirit, will follow the Lord fully:—and

Thirdly. That those who follow the Lord fully shall be honorably distinguished by him.

First. We observe that real Christians are actuated by a different spirit from that of the world.—The apostle Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, 2d chapter and 12th verse, distinguishes between the two different spirits by which men are actuated; he says, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."—Let us, in a few particulars, contrast these opposite spirits.—The spirit of the world is a spirit of darkness and error; for we are assured, in the passage just referred to, that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," even when they are proposed to him; and though they are a display of the infinite wisdom of God, they seem to him "foolishness;" and while he is under the influence of the spirit of the world, "he cannot know them," for, to know them aright we must have "the Spirit of God:" by his aid alone they are "spiritually discerned;" and all believers have the Spirit of God, who is also "the Spirit of Truth;" and by his teaching they "know the things which are freely given to us of God." The spirit of the world is a spirit of enmity against God. "The carnal mind," of which the apostle speaks—unchanged by the Spirit of God, is "enmity against God;" and this enmity against God is manifested both by disobedience to the divine law, and contempt of the divine Gospel; so that they who are yet "in the flesh, cannot please God," and "if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his:" but, if the Spirit of God, which is also the Spirit of love, dwell in us, then are we brought into a state of reconciliation and friendship with God, and are enabled to walk with him in love.—Again, the spirit of the world is a spirit of pride. Pride is natural to man—to

every man; so that every mortal, however mean, guilty, and condemned by the broken law of God, fondly conceives that he has some excellencies that raise him above others, and can venture to boast of his good heart and of his good works: but, how contrary is this to the humbling Gospel of Jesus! Our Lord himself says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God"—"when the commandment comes"—when the law comes to the conscience with light and power, as once it did to the heart of Saul the Pharisee, then pride receives a deadly blow; the rebel falls at the feet of Christ, and cries "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do;" he receives the broken heart and the contrite spirit, which in the sight of God are of great price. Once more, the spirit of the world is an indolent spirit, that is, in matters of religion: however diligent a man may be in the affairs of the world, yet how irksome to him is prayer, and other religious duties! how dull and tedious the Sabbath day! what a neglected book is the Bible! But, when we have the Spirit of God, we possess an active spirit, compared in Scripture to "a well of water—springing up to everlasting life," and rendering the exercises of pure religion natural and pleasant to us. Again, the spirit of the world is an earthly spirit—so our Lord testifies that, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh"—it is nothing more—nothing better. While men remain in a state of nature, they "love the world and the things of the world;" they seek and delight only in carnal objects; but if we have the Spirit of God, we "seek the things that are above," and give an habitual preference to them; weighing them in the balances of the sanctuary, where all things else, compared with them, must be found wanting. The spirit of the world is a dastardly spirit. The spies were terrified with the gigantic stature of the Amalekites, but they forgot the Almighty God, who had delivered them out of Egypt, carried them through the Red Sea, sustained them by miracle in the wilderness, and promised to deliver them from all their enemies. Thus natural men are wonderfully afraid of the difficulties of Religion; they are extremely afraid of meeting the scornful smile of the world, for "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer," at least that species of persecution; but, on the other hand, if we have the Spirit of God, we shall not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ—of the cause of Christ—of the name of Christ; but we shall determine, with courageous Paul, to glory and

to glory in nothing else but in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Finally, the spirit of the world is a spirit of unbelief—this was the great crime of the people spoken of in this chapter; and the Lord complains, in the 11th verse, “How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shown among them?” And alas! how slowly do men give credit to the God of truth! How disposed are they to cavil at every peculiar and distinguishing doctrine of grace, and to catch hold of every difficulty and objection that can be started; while, perhaps, they themselves are slaves of their credulity as to the things of this world, and can receive even the grossest absurdities; but the real Christian is actuated by “the Spirit of truth;” he is “led into all truth,” and the Spirit of God in him is “a Spirit of faith;” he hears the word, mixes faith with it, and is profited by it. But,

In the second place, Those who possess a right spirit will follow the Lord fully.—“My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath *followed me fully.*”

To “follow the Lord,” is a scriptural phrase, in allusion to the affairs of men, and is used to include the whole of true religion. Thus, you know, soldiers follow their leader, children follow their parents, disciples follow their teacher; and following the Lord *fully*, is to be distinguished from following him *partially*, as many do—some profess to approve of serious religion, and perhaps, “do many things gladly;” yet they make some reserves; there are some omissions which they allow; some indulgences which they retain; and they are far from being universal, or uniform, or consistent in their religious services. Such persons resemble the people we read of in the 2d book of Kings, the 17th chapter,—the Babylonians who were sent to reside in Samaria;—“they feared the Lord, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations who carried them away from thence”—“they feared the Lord”—they thought he was the God of that country, and that they ought to show some respect to him, but at the same time, they retained a superior regard to their own false deities, whom they had served in Babylon. Natural men resemble these very much in their religion; they pretend to fear and serve God, but at the same time are devoted to the service of idols; but this is a temper peculiarly displeasing to him. His language is, “My son, give me thine heart;” nor will he be content with

only a part of that—he must have the whole heart. Hear how he resented this partial kind of spirit, in the primitive church of Laodicea, “I would that thou wert either cold or hot; but because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will utterly reject thee.” There are many who, at least occasionally, attend the preaching of the Gospel; they admire and commend it; and it is to them, as to some of old, “a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument;” but it is added, “they hear thy words; but they do them not.” They are pleased at church, and equally pleased at the theatre and ball-room. The well-sung hymn delights them much; but they are equally delighted with the song of vanity. They are grave, and can perhaps weep under a pathetic sermon, and they can weep with equal devotion at a tragedy. They associate with the pious, and join with them in their public services; but their dress, their manners, their chosen companions—all proclaim that they are still “of the world;” such persons, assuredly, do not follow the Lord fully.

What is it then fully to follow him? I would express the whole, briefly, in a few particulars. It is, I conceive to give full credit to the divine testimony—To pay a practical regard to all the ordinances of divine worship—To aim at the most perfect obedience to the command of God—To seek the fullest enjoyment of communion with him; and, To be zealous in promoting his cause in the world.

In the first place, it is to give full credit to the *whole* (not to a *part* only) of the divine testimony: And does not this testimony deserve and demand it? God is “a God of truth;” he cannot lie; he cannot deceive, or be deceived; but not to believe what he speaks, is “to make him a liar.” It is a horrid crime, surely, to disbelieve the testimony of the God of truth; and *finally* to do so, is certain and everlasting ruin. Our first mother disbelieved the divine testimony, while she gave credit to the father of lies, and thus she fell. Thus also Israel fell in the wilderness; and thus their posterity, many ages afterwards, filled up the measure of their iniquities. The Gospel is of a simple nature; it demands “the obedience of faith,” for “this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John iii. 23,) and it is farther written, that “he who believeth hath eternal life, and he that believeth not is already condemned.” The Doctrines are divinely true, and are to be implicitly re-

ceived; the Promises are to be considered as faithful, because he is faithful who hath made them; and we should imitate Abraham, whose faith is peculiarly celebrated, because he consulted not with flesh and blood—he calculated not upon probabilities, but fully believed that what God had promised he was able to perform; and if we are Christians indeed, we thus receive the divine word; we “hear the voice of the Son of God,” and as the sheep of Christ, follow our divine Shepherd, whithersoever he goeth.

Again, to follow the Lord fully includes a regard to all the Ordinances of divine appointment. This is the commendation of Zacharias and Elizabeth, that they “walked in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless”—among these prayer has an eminent place. “Praying always,” says the apostle, “with all prayer,”—private prayer, domestic prayer, social prayer, pure prayer. Indeed they who pray most, follow the Lord the most fully. Hearing the word is also our bounden duty, and our delightful privilege; it is a principal ordinance of God, both for the conversion of sinners and the building up of believers. Such likewise is the daily study of the holy Scriptures. If we follow the Lord fully, “the word of Christ will dwell in us richly, and we shall meditate therein day and night. Give me leave also to say—that Attendance on the table of the Lord belongs to the duty of following the Lord fully. Many humble Christians, it may be, through a groundless timidity, too long neglect this holy ordinance; but it is both their fault and their misfortune; for doubtless they are great sufferers thereby. Now, to follow the Lord *fully* in all these things, is to engage in them with regard to the divine authority—with seriousness and sincerity, as in the presence of God, and not occasionally, merely as humor and convenience may dictate; but resolutely and constantly, that so we may, as it were, “dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of our life.”

Further, following the Lord fully, includes obedience to the divine commands.—Believers are not, by the Gospel, released from their natural obligations to obedience; nothing can alter the right of God to command, nor the obligation of man to obey; and therefore no wilful omission is to be pleaded for: no actual sin is to be indulged: self must be denied: the flesh crucified; the world opposed; nor are we to sit down contented with the lowest degrees of sanctification, but rather to aim at the highest.

Likewise, with regard to that fellowship and communion with God which is the high privilege of the saints, we are to “hunger and thirst after righteousness;” and to say with the Psalmist, “My soul followeth hard after God;” and after all we must confess, with the Apostle, “We have not yet attained, nor are we yet perfect, but we press forward towards the mark, for the high prize of our calling in Christ Jesus.”

I only add to this, Zeal in promoting the cause of Christ in the world—He has a cause; his kingdom is to increase; and this is to be effected by instruments; *we* are his instruments; and the present is a special and favorable time for exertion; there are more facilities now, and in this country, than ever were known before; and therefore they who would follow the Lord fully, must set their shoulders to the work, and do every thing in their power to promote the cause and kingdom of God in this wicked world.

I proceed to the last thing, which is, That those who follow the Lord fully shall be honorably distinguished.

How remarkably favored was the upright and courageous Caleb! The promise in the text, made to him, was very remarkable; “Him will I bring into the land whereinto he went, and his seed shall possess it;” and though the fulfilment of the promise was delayed for forty-five years, yet the Lord preserved him in remarkable health and strength, so that at the age of eighty-five he declared his health was as firm as it was when he was forty, when he went forth as a spy into the land: and if you turn to the 14th chapter of the Book of Joshua, you will there find that Caleb came forward to Joshua, the leader of the people, claiming the possession of the inheritance, “Behold, says he, the Lord hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years; even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness, and now, lo I am this day fourscore and five years old, as yet I am as strong as I was in the day when Moses sent me.” O what a distinction was this, when among all the people who came out of Egypt, who were then twenty years old, two only reached the place, and were put in possession of the promise, all the rest (more than 600,000) fell in the wilderness, through unbelief.

As God distinguished Caleb, so will he distinguish all those who follow him fully. It is said of Enoch, before his translation, that he had this testimony, that he pleased God: and it ought to be the ambition of

every Christian thus to please God by following him fully as Enoch did. Such persons also frequently receive the approbation of men, of all *good men* certainly, for they must heartily approve of following God fully; but even bad men will often commend. Courage and consistency will gain the approbation of the world, and a wicked man has been known to say, "If I could believe as such a one does, I should act like him; nay, I should surpass him."—There is another advantage, and that is, The approbation of conscience. Happy they who can say with St. Paul, "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation in the world." Another advantage is, that many temptations are avoided. Peter followed his master "afar off," and miserably fell;—John followed him closely, and he stood his ground. They are in the greatest danger of falling by temptation, who keep at the greatest distance from God. But, after all—the great thing is,—Eternal glory will crown the whole; even as Caleb was put into possession of that rest, which from the power and faithfulness of God he expected to enjoy. Not that the glory of heaven can in any way be considered as our desert, or the wages of our fidelity.—No; he that follows the Lord most fully, will be the most ready to say, "I have been an unprofitable servant;" yet the gracious recompense to which faith looks forward, shall unquestionably be bestowed. The promise is, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." No man more than Paul ever magnified the grace of God; and yet, looking forward to death, he says, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give to me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them who love his appearing."—As Caleb entered the promised land, so shall the believer enter the heavenly Canaan, for not one word which a faithful God has spoken shall fall to the ground.

From what has been said, we may learn, First, that the true character of every man is fully known to God; it is recorded in the book of his remembrance, and it shall be published before an assembled world. It will then appear whether we followed *God* at all; whether we followed him partially; or whether we followed him fully.

Perhaps some who now hear me, follow not the Lord at all—they are indeed *fol-*

lowing—it is "the devices and desires of their own hearts:" but what said the Lord Jesus when he was upon earth? "He that taketh not up his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." If we follow not the Lord, yea, if we follow him not *fully*, we have no part nor lot 'n the matter; and if we follow him not, whither are we going? there is but one other way, and that is the *broad way* that leads to death and destruction.—O sinner, stop! stop! in this thy way—for there may be but a step between thee and death.—O turn again, and God will have mercy upon you.

Others, perhaps, follow the Lord only in the partial manner that has been described. O how dishonorable this is to God! Is his service then of such a nature that he deserves not thy whole heart? Consider what a loser you must be by this partial sort of conduct. How dubious must it leave your state! Is not the state of your minds such that you cannot certainly say whether you are following the Lord or not? How uncomfortable is this condition!—many persons have religion enough to make them miserable, but not enough to make them happy.—O be persuaded no longer to act this part, but from this moment, resolve, in the strength of divine grace, to give up your whole selves unto him—body, soul, and spirit, which is your *reasonable* service.

Finally—Let believers in Christ be animated and encouraged by the example of Caleb. When he got possession of the charming hill of Hebron, how delightfully would he review the way in which he had been led through the wilderness! Did he repent of his courage and perseverance? No; he would reflect with thankfulness on the power, goodness, and faithfulness of God! rejoicing not so much in his pleasant inheritance, as in the divine approbation. Let us then follow his example, and cheerfully obey the apostolic exhortation.—"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

PRAYER.—IN thy service, O Lord, is perfect freedom, and by thy guidance alone we can be directed in perfect safety to obtain everlasting bliss and glory. We confess, and would deeply lament, that we have followed the devices and desires of our own hearts, instead of thy holy, just, and good commands. Even though we have professed to follow thee, how deficient and inconstant has been our obedience! Justly mayest thou reject our services, and reply to us, Who hath required this at your hands? But with thee, O Lord, is forgiveness; with thee there is plenteous redemption. May the time

past suffice for us to have deceived ourselves, by pretending to serve thee, together with our idols of worldly pleasure, interest, or honor. When tempted by these to draw back from following thee, may we remember, that, he who loveth the things of the world, hath not the love of God in him. May we fear to offend thee, and fear nothing else. May we love thee, with all our heart and mind; and so follow thee, as children follow their much-loved parents. Thou art able to do for those who love thee, more than we can ask or think; and thou hast laid up for all who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honor, and immortality, more than ever entered the heart of man to conceive. Grant us thy Spirit, to overcome the world, to preserve us from falling, and to present us blameless before thee, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

SERMON LXXXII.

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.

Matthew xiii. 45, 46. The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.

THE true nature of the Christian religion may be easily learned from the parables of Christ. It was well known that whenever the Messiah should make his appearance, he would set up a new kingdom in the world; but the nature of that kingdom was miserably mistaken by the Jews; to remedy whose mistake our Lord gives us many parables, especially in this chapter, which plainly describe its true nature, as a *spiritual* kingdom; not one that should "come with observation," or outward show and splendor, like the kingdoms of this world, but which should be of an internal kind, and consist in "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

This parable, as well as that which precedes it, seems intended to point out the excellency of Christ and his great salvation, in the esteem of all true Christians. In the former parable, he is compared to treasure hid in a field, which a man having discovered, parts with all his possessions in order to purchase the field, and so make the hidden treasure his own. In this parable, our Savior is compared to a pearl, extremely valuable and precious, which a merchant, who was in quest of fine pearls, having met with, sells all his property in order to purchase it.

We may express the principal design of these words in the following observation.

Those persons who know the value of Christ, will prize an interest in him above all things.

The person represented in this parable as having found a pearl of great value, was in quest of precious jewels—a merchant—a dealer in jewels—accustomed to travel from one country to another, in search of such valuable articles, in order to obtain wealth by their purchase and sale. This fitly represents the man (indeed every man) who is searching for happiness, good, or pleasure; whose language is, "Who will show me any good?" The pursuits of men are various; but their principal object is the same; it is certainly happiness—happiness under some form or other; whether in the pleasures of sense, or the gratification of the mind. It is in the low and mean enjoyment of sensual pleasure that the bulk of mankind seek delight—to eat, to drink, to sleep; to be easy, gay, and merry, is all that the multitude seek. Others, more refined, direct their attention to arts or arms; they long to shine in courts or camps; to get a great name, and make a great figure in the world, and to obtain titles, and wealth, and distinction. These are the pearls which worldly men are seeking with great assiduity to possess, which few are able to obtain, and which, if obtained, are far from making the possessor happy. May I not say that Solomon was a merchant of this description—that he sailed round the world to obtain this jewel—happiness, and returned, after a tedious voyage, with his vessel empty? Hear his own confession, as recorded in the first chapter of Ecclesiastes: "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities, all is vanity." He tells us what he had tried; he had tried mirth, and costly entertainments, and gay amusements, and after all, Vanity was the total sum; yea, such was his vexation too, in consequence of repeated disappointments, that he says, "I hated life." Vexation at his failure made life a burden to him. Some worldly men are honest enough to make the same confession, and many of them do so when on a dying bed, and in the prospect of a vast eternity; and such must all men make when they come to die, who have not been happy enough to find this pearl of great price.

But we may consider, not only the man who is in pursuit of worldly good as the merchant, but those persons also who are *religiously disposed*, who wish to be virtuous and good; but who as yet know not the Lord, and have never discovered from the Gospel his inestimable worth. Man has been called, by some philosophers, "A religious animal;" and indeed it is wonderful to observe that in almost all coun-

tries, some sense of religion prevails, some adoration is paid to Deity, there is a dread of his anger, and a desire of his favor. A consciousness of guilt, and an apprehension of death, judgment, and eternity, strengthened by the customs of their forefathers, the laws of their country, and the example of the multitude, induce those who are not atheistical or brutish to perform some religious ceremonies, in hope of the divine favor, and frequently to obtain the applause of their fellow-men.

But it is truly pitiable to think how many, "being ignorant of God's righteousness, go about," as St. Paul said to the Jews, "to establish their own righteousness, not submitting to the righteousness of God," as revealed in the Gospel. Many will repeat a prodigious number of prayers; keep many fasts; submit to irksome penances; shut themselves up for life in monasteries and nunneries; and others will go tedious pilgrimages for hundreds of miles; yea, some will undergo bodily torments, and death itself, to secure eternal happiness. And this is the language of the person introduced by the prophet Micah, (chapter vi. 6,) "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" Here is a person represented as bidding high indeed for eternal life, and willing to obtain it at the greatest expense,—but it is the language of one who as yet is ignorant of Christ. And how many persons, among ourselves, for want of better information, profess a cold and comfortless religion—a system of painful restraints, and drudgery in duties; having no settled peace nor joy, but serving God with the spirit of a slave! But if it please him to bring the inquirer, by the Gospel, to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, as an all-sufficient Savior, full of grace and truth; who, by his obedience and his sufferings, has brought in an everlasting righteousness, by which every believer is fully and for ever justified,—and if brought to see that all the blessings of his great salvation are perfectly free, "without money and without price"—without any meritorious qualifications whatever—then is he like the merchant in the text, who, in the course of his journeys and inquiries, meets at last with a jewel of such extraordinary magnitude, beauty, and perfection, as infinitely to exceed all he had ever

seen, or heard of before; and finding that it is possible to make it his own, and that, by making it his own, he will insure an immense fortune, he is glad to obtain it by any means; most willingly he parts with all he has, well knowing it is worth more than all, and that by the loss of all, he shall become an unspeakable gainer.

By this striking similitude, our Lord here represents the true convert, the real Christian. He discovers, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, in the use of the Gospel, that Jesus Christ is truly excellent—superlatively excellent; he feels a vehement desire to be interested in him, and is ready, willingly, yea, most gladly, to part with every thing for his sake. You will clearly see how wisely he thinks and acts, if you will consider for a moment wherein this superior excellency of Christ consists.

Consider his personal dignity and glory. "Who is he, that we may believe in him?" his name is "*Immanuel*," "God with us." He is the Son of God; the only-begotten of the Father; "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person;"

"All human beauties—all divine,
In our Beloved meet and shine."

In him are combined all the glorious perfections of Deity, and all the unsullied excellencies of humanity. "Great," indeed, and without controversy,—"*Great* is this mystery of godliness—God was manifest in the flesh." And, beholding his glory, the believer may well exclaim with Thomas, "My Lord! and my God!"

Behold him in the character of Mediator; one, the only one, qualified to interpose between parties so remote from each other, as the holy Jehovah and guilty men. He is fully qualified, inclined, and authorized, to make up the breach. Yea, he has actually made reconciliation for iniquity, by the sacrifice of himself; for with his righteousness God is well pleased; and through him pardon and eternal life are freely proclaimed, and the chief of sinners are invited to receive them.

Consider, likewise, the gracious offices and characters which he sustains, and which render him precisely what we want to make us happy. We are ignorant; he is the great Instructor; "he teacheth to profit," and "none teacheth like him." We are guilty; his blood cleanseth us from all sin; and washed in that blessed fountain, we are "whiter than snow." We are rebellious creatures; he brings us back to God, makes us willing in the day of his power, and we become his humble and faithful subjects. He is a prince, to

govern and protect us from all our crafty and powerful enemies, who lie in wait to destroy. We need a Friend—Jesus is that friend—a friend that sticketh closer than a brother, whose compassion and fidelity render him the best friend we can possibly find. We want a Counsellor:—He is our advocate, and will be our guide in every difficulty—for he has promised, that if we acknowledge him in all our ways, he will direct our paths. We are diseased, and ready to die. He is the great Physician, who is ready and able to restore us to health. We are poor—He “counsels us to buy gold of him,” and then are we rich indeed, rich towards God, and rich for ever.

Jewels are prized by vain mortals as ornaments. Wearing them is a mark of distinction; for inferior people cannot obtain them; and thus the wearer excites notice and admiration in the gay circles of the great. This may be thought a pitiable weakness; when poor vain mortals value themselves on a profusion of sparkling stones—but he who possesses the pearl of great price is fine indeed; he that “puts on the Lord Jesus Christ” surpasses an angel in splendor; like the church, in the vision of St. John, he may be said to be “clothed with the sun;” and those become honorable—for “to them that believe he is precious,” or, “an honor.” Dignified indeed, beyond expression, is he who possesses this pearl of great price.

In the days of superstition, precious stones were worn as amulets, or charms, to protect the wearer from divers diseases and mischiefs. We know of no such virtue in earthly jewels; but we assert that Christ is the *true Amulet*; and if we “bear about the body the dying of the Lord Jesus,” nothing shall by any means hurt us;

“We shall be safe;
For God displays
Superior power,
And guardian grace.”

Now, if Jesus Christ possesses all these excellencies, (and the one half has not been told you) and if the soul that obtains an interest in him will be thus benefited, it is no wonder that the wise merchant, discovering his inestimable worth, should be willing to sell all that he hath, for his sake.

He is found: and blessed is he who has found him. In the parable of “the treasure,” which precedes our text, it is represented as “hid in a field;” not obvious to the eye of the careless and inattentive

traveller: and pearls are generally procured from the bottom of the ocean; so that he who finds the one must dig for it; and he who gets the other must dive for them. The blessings of salvation escape the notice of the careless and carnal; but “he that seeks shall find.”—Here, then, in the word of the gospel, is this mighty treasure to be found. It is the business of the minister of the Gospel to display this treasure, to proclaim its value, and to invite his hearers instantly to seek it; but it is the office of the Holy Spirit alone, to lead the seeking soul to obtain the prize; it is his gracious business to glorify Christ, and this he does by “taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to men.”

When this discovery is once made, then holy and earnest desires will rise in the soul, or rather *this* desire—this one desire, swallowing up, as it were, all the rest; so that he, who once was used to say, “Who will show me any good?” now cries, “Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me.” He who once was used to say, “I see no form nor comeliness in him, wherefore I should desire him,” now exclaims, “He is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely.” He, who when formerly invited to the gospel feast, “desired to be excused,” now “hungers and thirsts after righteousness.” “Yea, doubtless,” says the believer, with holy Paul, “I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; and count them (all things) but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him.”

Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
More than all in thee I find.

But how is this pearl to be obtained? It is to be bought,—“he goes and sells all that he has, and buys it.” We are not to strain the metaphor, as if it were to imply that, by any valuable consideration whatever, we can merit this inestimable treasure; the meaning is, that the Christian gives such a hearty and decided preference to Christ, above all worldly things whatever, as to be willing, if need be, to part with them all, should they stand in the way of obtaining his grace, his righteousness, and his salvation. And, indeed, to say the truth, there are some things which must be parted with. That good opinion, for instance, of ourselves, which we are too apt to entertain; that dependence we are prone to place upon a religious education, upon freedom from gross vices, upon our goodness, virtue, sincerity, charity—all must be parted with. Our own righte-

ousness must be accounted as filthy rags, if we would wear the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Sinful indulgences, of whatever description they may be, must also be given up. This splendid jewel would look ill upon him, who is covered with the deformity of sinful practices; and however dear these indulgences may be, and though the parting with them may be painful, as the plucking out the right eye, or cutting off the right hand, it must be done. We must "crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts;" and those who are Christ's are willing so to do.

Reputation must not seldom be forfeited, in consequence of our attachment to Christ, his cause and his people. If we cleave to Christ as we ought, we must separate ourselves from the world; and if we do so, we shall find by experience the truth of our Lord's saying, John xv. 18, 19. "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."—Protected, as we happily are by the laws of our country, from the hand of violence on account of our religion; yet, there is no power upon earth that can screen us from the reproach of the cross. Men will "speak evil of us;" but let it be "*falsely*," and for Christ's sake."

And shall we not be willing to bear reproach for him who "made himself of no reputation," for us? Shall we not readily part with our reputation and "follow him without the camp, bearing his reproach? Fear it not; it should rather be esteemed a jewel that adorns us. The cross of Jesus is our best ornament; God forbid we should glory in any thing except in that cross.

In the times of persecution, not character only, but liberty, and life itself were forfeited. Our Lord most candidly told his disciples, upon what terms they must become such,—that they must be willing to part with father and mother, wife and children, houses and lands, and to be hated and persecuted by all; and to take up their cross and follow him, or else they could not be his disciples. Nor did they think the purchase too dear. Did they refuse the terms? By no means. Like Moses of old, they "esteemed the reproach of Christ, greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt." The Apostles of our Lord, when evil entreated, "departed from the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ;" and "they took joyfully the

spoiling of their goods, knowing that in heaven they had a better and a more enduring substance."

IMPROVEMENT.

To conclude—You have heard the character of the wise merchant, and do you approve of it? Did he not act judiciously? Is not gain the proper object of a tradesman? and who blames a man for making a good bargain?—Now, say, Is this *your* character? What is your chief object—the object of your warmest desires? and that for which you are ready to part with all? Is it the World? Alas! it is vain! Make it not your portion; it will deceive and disappoint you. Even now, it does not afford you satisfaction; but think, O think, of the solemnities of a dying hour. Think of that awful period, when you shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.—I ask, What *then* will profit you? what but Christ? Then, every soul will be ready to say with the Martyr, "None but Christ, none but Christ." I demand, Why do you not say so *now*?—Why should not that *now* be the language of your hearts; not waiting till the horrors of death and the dread of judgment shall extort it? O let me entreat you now, even now, to turn away your eyes from beholding vanity, and such will all terrestrial objects prove. Behold this great and glorious object, JESUS, with his great and eternal salvation, is set before you. How are you disposed towards it? Perhaps this may be the last time that ever this gracious Savior may be thus presented to you, or that you may be affectionately invited to regard and receive him. If you reject him now, perhaps he will be for ever rejected. How then will you decide? Do you esteem him or not? Methinks, angels pause to witness your answer, and report it in heaven. Be persuaded to take the advice of Jesus—especially you who are young—"Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things, (needful for life and for godliness) shall be added unto you."

It may be that you *are* seeking; and perhaps, you may be seeking in sorrow: but, fear not, the Lord hath said, "He that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth," and the wise man, to whom I before referred, who not only knew the vanity of the world, but also the excellency of true wisdom, says, "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the

fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."—The Lord giveth wisdom, he has promised to give it to them who ask it, and that liberally. And are you really willing to part with any thing, to part with every thing, that stands in the way of your enjoyment of Christ? If you were suffered to retain only one thing in the world, what would that one thing be? I can readily answer for every true believer—It would be Christ. Let every thing else go, he would say, give me Christ, and that is enough.

But perhaps you are discouraged at the terms proposed. The text directs you to make a purchase; and when you contemplate the infinite value of the pearl in question, you say, I can offer nothing in the least degree valuable. I have nothing. I am nothing. I can do nothing. How can I presume to purchase the pearl of great price? You say truly. You have indeed, as was before observed, no valuable consideration to offer. But let not this discourage you. In another Scripture, resembling this, wherein the blessings of the Gospel are compared to food and drink of the richest quality, and sinners are invited to come and purchase them, the terms run thus—"And he that hath *no money*; come ye; yea, come, buy wine and milk, *without money, and without price.*" Isaiah lv. 1. which is as much as to say, Ye shall be welcome to these great benefits, though utterly unworthy of them. Accept them as God's free gifts, and be content to be for ever indebted to grace—only saying, "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift!"

Finally—How rich and how happy is the believer in Jesus!—We congratulate our friends when they have made a prosperous voyage; or when, in the course of providence, an addition is made to their wealth; but O how much rather is a child of God to be congratulated!—"I know thy poverty," said Jesus Christ to the Church of Smyrna, "I know thy poverty, but thou art rich;"—they were poor in this world, but they were rich in faith; rich towards God; and if thus rich *now*, how will the glorified believer be enriched! this jewel will retain its value and its lustre beyond the grave, and will enrich and adorn the soul for ever and ever; yea a brilliant crown of glory awaits every believer in Jesus. God grant that this may be our final happiness, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

PRAYER.—THANKS be to God for the unspeakable gift of salvation! We bless thee, O

Lord, that thou hast so loved our world as to send into it thine only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but should have everlasting life. With him thou freely givest to us all things richly to enjoy. On them who walk uprightly, thou bestowest, for his sake, grace and glory; and withholdest from them nothing that is good. While many say, Who will show us any good? O Lord, lift up thou the light of thy countenance upon us. That shall rejoice us more than all increase of earthly enjoyments. May we then pass on toward the mark to obtain the prize of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus. May we lay aside every encumbrance, and our most easily besetting sins, that we may persevere in our race, looking unto Jesus, who for the joy set before him, endured the pain and the disgrace of the cross. May we choose for our portion that inestimable treasure, which every one that seeketh findeth, and which alone can insure to us everlasting satisfaction. May we count all things loss for Christ; that living and dying he may be our gain; our life, our peace, our joy unspeakable, even now; and our glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON LXXXIII.

SINNERS ARE SELF-DESTROYERS, BUT SALVATION IS OF GOD.

Hos. xiii. 9. O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help.

"WHATEVER was written aforetime was written for our learning." Those things, especially, which were written to the Jews, are full of instruction to us. The literal meaning of the words is this—"Israel," that is to say, the ten tribes, exclusive of Judah and Benjamin, were awfully prone to idolatry, and it proved their destruction. In the 16th verse of this chapter it is said, "Samaria shall become desolate, for she hath rebelled against her God; they shall fall by the sword, their infants shall be dashed in pieces." Notwithstanding which, God was pleased to promise that he would be "their help;" and in the words which follow our text he says, "I will be thy king."—God himself would graciously reside in the midst of them, to rule and to save them.

It may appear to us very strange, that a people so singularly favored of God as Israel was, should be so prone to depart from him—that a people so signalized by mercies, who were brought forth out of Egypt, sustained in the wilderness, and introduced into the promised land, by a series of miracles, that they, of all people on the earth, should forsake the God of their mercies, and fall into abominable idolatries! But alas! in this they were but a picture of fallen nature in general; indeed we may say, a picture of ourselves, who have re-

ceived so much from God and yet made so ungenerous a return. The words of the text are directed to us; it may be said to every one of us—"Sinner, thou hast destroyed thyself;" but, for thy consolation hear this, "In me is thy help found." These words may be said to include both law and Gospel; they describe the sad condition of man as a fallen sinner, and yet they open to him the door of hope.

From these words I shall show,

First, That sin is a most destructive evil.

Secondly, That every sinner is a self-destroyer.

And Thirdly, That there is help and salvation in Jesus Christ, even for self-destroying sinners. "*O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thine help.*"

In the first place we shall show that sin is a most destructive evil; and if men were convinced of this, the great point in religion would be gained: but men's persistence in sin; their false peace; and their neglect of the Gospel, all prove they are *not* convinced of this; and we ourselves, in fact, seem to be but *half* convinced.

To prevent the impression of this awful truth—that sin is a destructive evil—Satan interposes with his first lie—"Ye shall not surely die," said he to our first mother, though God had said, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt *surely* die;" and in the same way, Satan has ever maintained his destructive system; it is by this means, chiefly, that he has "deceived the whole world." We are likewise cautioned against "the deceitfulness of sin;" and we are told that "the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." O when these three notorious deceivers meet together, woe be to man—a deceitful heart, deceitful sin, and a deceitful devil, aided by the general opinion and practice of a deceitful world in every successive age! Transgressors think it very hard that their beloved pursuits should be deemed so dangerous and destructive; but we appeal to "the word and to the testimony." The same word which assures you that there is a God, that you have an immortal soul, that it is appointed for men to die and come to judgment, that there is a future resurrection, that there is a heaven and a hell; the same word assures you that sin is a most destructive evil. What was it but sin that destroyed the happiness of angels in heaven—transformed them into infernal demons, and rendered them miserable for ever! What was it that destroyed the

happiness of our first parents in the garden of Paradise? Why did God drive them out? What destroyed the image of God in human nature? for man was made in the image of God; but what is he now? an awful mixture of the brute and the fiend. Now we find darkness instead of knowledge, depravity instead of holiness, guilt instead of righteousness.

Turn your eyes to the surface of the earth. What destroyed its original fertility, and made it productive of "thorns and of thistles?" The ground was "cursed for man's sake," because he was a sinner. What has destroyed the general tranquillity of man? It was sin that opened the door to millions of evils. The poor babe enters weeping into the world, while it risks the life of its mother! What legions of fierce and lothesome diseases assail us in every stage of life—in infancy, in youth, and in old age! Behold the youth carried headlong by his tumultuous passions into vice, extravagance, and destruction. See then the man in middle age, struggling with labor, poverty, care, vexation, and disappointment; and then behold age, bending under the weight of infirmities, and saying, "Thou art righteous, O God, but 'thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the sins of my youth.'"

Sin is the grand disturber of the world. It is sin that disturbs the conscience, that disturbs families, churches, cities, and nations. None will deny that it has destroyed millions of millions of the human race, sweeping away, once in about every thirty years, all its numerous inhabitants, "for dust we are, and to dust we must all return." What vast multitudes die in their infancy! What multitudes are cut off by intemperance! How many have perished by bloody persecutions! and still more by direful wars! What myriads have been drowned in the seas, or consumed by lightning, or swallowed up, by hundreds and thousands at a time, by fearful earthquakes! and O that this, awful as it is, were the worst! but still further destruction awaits the impenitent, and without an interest in the great salvation of Christ, the *soul* as well as the body must be destroyed—not, indeed, by annihilation, which the wicked would earnestly desire, but by "a second death"—an eternal banishment from the presence of God. Fear him, then, who can not only "kill the body, but who is able to cast both body and soul into hell." Yes, sin is indeed destructive. "The wages of sin is death," and, as St. James saith, "When lust hath conceived,

it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth *death*." Hear also what the holy law of God denounces against every transgressor: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." This then is the state of the case, and is it not most true that sin is a destructive evil? O Israel, that thou hast *destroyed* thyself! and this will appear more plainly by showing,

In the second place, that

Sinners are self-destroyers. "O Israel, thou hast destroyed *thyself*."

What is more shocking than for persons, renouncing that natural self-love which rules all mankind, to prepare for their own destruction the fatal bowl, the knife or the pistol, or the halter, or to plunge into a watery grave? Here we pity, while we blame; and yet all wilful sinners are acting the same desperate part; they are destroying themselves, and yet they are not aware of it; and if they are at all apprehensive of their errors, they are apt to throw the blame on others, yea, even upon the blessed God himself. Against this presumption the Apostle James cautions us, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God—God tempteth no man; but every man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lust." Sinners, although they are self-destroyers, always endeavor to throw off the blame from themselves upon others. Our first parent wished to transfer the blame from himself, and therefore said, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I did eat." She also, as unwilling to bear the blame, said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." Thus also it is that sinners blame their passions, and charge their vices upon their constitutions, or upon their companions, or upon "their situations in life, and sometimes upon Satan: but unless the tempter had found a proneness in us to sin, all his temptations would be fruitless, as they were when they were exercised upon the Lord of life and glory. Alas! all the sins we commit flow from our own polluted hearts. So our Lord says, in the 15th chapter of the Gospel by St. Matthew, "Those things which proceed out of the mouth, come forth from the heart, and those are the things which defile the man." It will be found therefore, that the blame is all our own; that there is an obstinate persistence in sin against the remonstrances of conscience, and the admonitions of God. Thus, of old, he spake unto the house of Israel, "As I live," saith the Lord, "I have no pleasure

in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for *why will ye die*, O house of Israel?" This expostulation plainly throws the guilt upon man, as his own destroyer; why *will ye die*, O house of Israel?—it arises from the wilful obstinacy and hardness of the human heart. The prophet also charges the Jews with a wilful resistance to the Gospel, "they shut their eyes that they might not see; they stopped their ears that they might not hear;" and our blessed Lord says expressly to the unbelieving Jews, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life;" and in our Lord's admirable discourse with Nicodemus, as recorded in the 3d chapter of St. John, it is expressly said, "He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God," and "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and that men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil; for every one that doth evil, hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd."

True penitents will readily confess this; they will take shame to themselves; and say with the Royal Penitent, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight." Yes, real Christians, under their deepest afflictions, will adopt this language, "Shall a living man complain,—a man for the punishment of his sins?" And, depend upon it, whatever excuses men now make, the time will come when "every mouth shall be stopped, and all the world be found (and confess themselves) guilty before God." "The books will be opened," and a clear impartial statement made, and the righteous judgment of God will be apparent to all; it will then appear that the way of sin was chosen; that it was preferred, and that wilful unbelief prevailed. Sinners know what frequently passes in their own minds concerning this; they put a force upon themselves, and stifle all convictions; resolving, whatever the consequences may be, that they will proceed. Sinners are self-destroyers—but we go on,

In the third and last place, to show that

There is salvation in Jesus Christ, even for self-destroying sinners.

O what news, what good news, what unexpected news, do we find in this third part of our subject! "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself;"—and what might be expected to follow?—You must take the

consequences—it is the fruit of your own doings—but, instead of this, God has been graciously pleased to say, “In me is thine help found.” Thus, in another place, where we have a long and a black catalogue of the sins of Israel—where the heavens and the earth are called upon to witness their iniquity, yet it is followed up with this encouraging language—“Come now, and let us reason together,” saith the Lord, “though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

The help—the salvation which sinners stand in need of, can only come from God. “Shame and confusion of face belong unto us,”—but it is added, (O blessed addition!)—“To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him.” The truth is, man neither wants this help, nor could procure it if he did. Man does not want it; he sees little or no need of pardon; he justifies his offences, in part, and is inattentive to that Gospel which proclaims redemption. And as to another great branch of it, the sanctification of our nature,—he not only does not desire it, but he dreads it; he has no sort of wish for it, and the name of a *Saint* is, in his opinion, nearly the same as that of an hypocrite, or a fanatic.

But if men really desired it, how could they obtain it? Who could have devised that wonderful plan of redemption which is laid before us in the Gospel? Who could have made atonement for the sins of the world? Who could have cleansed the foul hearts of men, and made them new? Who could have procured a good title to endless glory? As well might a sinner create a new sun, a new moon, or a new world, as bring about the least part of this great salvation. But God says, “In me is thy help found.” Mercy, unsought as well as undeserved, first moved his gracious heart: “He remembered us in our low estate, for his mercy endureth for ever.” Hence that marvellous, that unparalleled, that unspeakable gift,—God’s own dear Son, incarnate in our nature. “Help was laid upon him, who came, not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. In the 89th Psalm he says, “I have laid help upon one that is mighty, whom I have chosen from among the people.” It pleased God to punish the sin of man in the person of his Son. “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed.” “He died, the just for the unjust;” he bore the curse to

remove it from us; he was “made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,”—through him there is pardon for sins of the deepest dye. Yes, if any one sinner had as much guilt as usually falls to the lot of a thousand, there is pardon even for such an one, if he come to God through Jesus Christ. In order to encourage the chief of sinners, we find examples held forth, such as that of the Apostle Paul in the 1st Epistle to Timothy, i. 15. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief; howbeit, for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first, Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.”

Yes; there is sufficient help, for every purpose of our salvation, not only for the pardon of the greatest sinners, but grace that can conquer the most obdurate hearts, even those that are as hard as adamant. God will “take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh.” Powerful lusts, though deeply fixed in our very nature, may be rooted up by the grace of Christ; even confirmed habits of sin may be destroyed. Although the “Ethiopian cannot change his skin, or the leopard his spots,” yet those who have long been in the habit of doing evil, may learn to do well. God can raise up children to Abraham, out of the very stones; and the power which effects this is compared to that which effected the resurrection of the dead body of Christ from the grave.

The same grace is sufficient to preserve the soul in the midst of the strongest temptations. He is able to keep his people unhurt in the most dangerous circumstances, even as the three confessors remained unsinged in the burning fiery furnace; or as Jonah was kept alive for three days and three nights in the belly of the fish. We daily witness the miracles of divine grace, as marvellous as if a stone were suspended in the air, or a spark kept alive in the ocean. We are “kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.”

Thus we see that sin is a most destructive evil—that every sinner is a self-destroyer,—and that there is help and salvation in Christ even for the self-destroying sinner.

IMPROVEMENT.

FROM the whole, let us learn, First, to think rightly of sin. Here is the soul-ruin-

ing mistake of men. They are not told, or will not believe, that sin is of a destructive nature. Beware of slight thoughts of sin. Sin is no trifle. They are "fools only who make a mock at sin." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." "Let no man deceive you with vain words; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience." Listen not, my friends—you especially who are young, listen not to your deluded companions, who would persuade you that there is no danger. Thus Satan deceived our first mother, and ruined the world. Beware, lest it ruin you. I entreat you to believe God, and disbelieve the enemy; yea, I may say, believe your ears; believe your eyes; believe your feelings; surely you may believe when you see around you so many horrid effects of sin, and hear, as it were, the groans of the damned, all uniting to say—Depend upon it, sin is a destructive evil. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, (Luke xvi. 19, &c.) the former, who, after a worldly life of self-indulgence, is represented as lifting up his eyes in torments, and in vain requesting the momentary relief of a drop of water to cool his tongue, requests that a messenger may be sent to his father's house, to testify to his surviving brethren, lest they also come into the same place of torment. What was the testimony he wished to be made to them? Was it not this—that sin indulged, destroys the soul?—that sinners are, as has been, self-destroyers! But in vain did he request that such a message might be sent. It was needless. The same testimony had been made by Moses and the prophets, whom he and they refused to hear. The same testimony is now made to you. O hear it, receive it, and act accordingly.

But there is another, a superadded evil; something, if possible, more destructive than sin itself—I mean unbelief—a rejection of the Gospel, which will prove more fatal than all other sins; for, as we have already said from God's word, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men have loved darkness rather than light." How then "shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" That is a question which is not answered; it is a question that cannot be answered; it is a question that is not intended to be answered; "How can we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

How earnestly, then, should every sinner cry to the Lord for help! He says, "In *me* is thy help." In *me*. In *me only*.

I am the God of salvation. In vain shall it be looked for anywhere else. But in *me* you may find it. In *me*, who was justly offended, but am now reconciled through the blood of my Son. I was angry, but my anger is turned away. Now I wait to be gracious. Ask and ye shall receive, seek and ye shall find: knock, and the door of mercy shall fly open. Then shall you say and sing, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also has become my salvation."

So ready is the Lord to bestow this blessing, that he would have the good news of it published to every creature; he is so ready to bestow it, even upon the worst of sinners, that when he ordered his apostles to go into all the world, he bid them begin at Jerusalem; that those persons who had embred their hands in his blood, should be the first to receive the advantage of the shedding of that blood for the pardon of their sins. It has been said that "*Now* is the accepted time," but you cannot be sure that it will ever be said so again; you cannot be sure that you shall ever have an opportunity after the present, of hearing this good news. I entreat you then to hear his voice while it is called to-day. Retire to your closets this very evening, you who have neglected it before: pour out your hearts before God, and seek an interest in this great salvation.

Finally, We learn from what has been said, that grace must have the whole glory of our salvation. We can destroy ourselves, but we cannot save ourselves; God says, "In *me* is thy help found." Salvation is invented, procured, bestowed, and applied by God himself; and every believer will gladly ascribe the praise to him. The language of his heart will be, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name be all the glory." Grace first contrived the plan; grace begins the work; grace carries on the work; grace will crown the work; and when the top-stone shall be laid, it will be with shoutings, crying Grace! Grace! unto it. Amen.

LORD, we confess our numerous faults,
How great our guilt has been!
Foolish and vain were all our thoughts,
And all our lives were sin.

But O, my soul, for ever praise,
For ever love his name,
Who turn thy feet from dangerous ways
Of folly, sin, and shame.

'Tis not by works of righteousness
Which our own hands have done;
But we are sav'd by sovereign grace
Abounding through his Son.

'Tis from the mercy of our God
That all our hopes begin;
'Tis by the water and the blood
Our souls are wash'd from sin.

'Tis through the purchase of his death,
Who hung upon the tree,
The Spirit is sent down to breathe
On such dry bones as we.

Rais'd from the dead, we live anew;
And, justify'd by grace,
We shall appear in glory too,
And see our Father's face.

PRAYER.—Thy word, O Lord, is truth. Just and holy are thy ways, thou King of Saints. Awful is our condition in thy sight: may it be duly so in ours! We are all lost creatures. Naturally at enmity with thee; nothing but a conviction of our desperate state can excite us to seek thy mercy, or to submit to thy righteousness. Sin hath been our choice, and its end can only be our destruction. Helpless in ourselves, hopeless from others, unless thou help us, Almighty God, we must eternally perish. But in thee is our help, for thou art light and love. Thou hast provided salvation for every one who seeks to be graciously received, and freely loved by thee. Thou art in Christ reconciling the world to thyself, not imputing to us our aggravated guilt; but sending thy messengers to instruct us in Christ's stead, that we would be reconciled to thee. Lord, we believe; help thou our unbelief, and glorify thy grace in us the chief of sinners, by granting us thy Holy Spirit, for Christ's sake; to whom be everlasting praise and glory. Amen.

SERMON LXXXIV.

ONESIMUS; OR, THE PROFITABLE SERVANT.

[ADAPTED PARTICULARLY TO SERVANTS.]

Epistle of St. Paul to Philemon, ver. 10, 11. I beseech thee for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten in my bonds; which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now, profitable to thee and to me.

THIS is a short epistle, written by the apostle Paul, to his Christian friend Philemon, who resided at Colosse; it was written in behalf of Onesimus, who had been a slave, belonging to Philemon. It appears that Onesimus had robbed his master, and then ran away from him to escape justice; he rambled to Rome, where the apostle Paul was then a prisoner, and by some means or other he went to hear him preach, probably in his own hired house: here he was converted to God, and became a new man; the apostle became acquainted with him, and Onesimus was much attached to him. The apostle felt himself interested in his welfare; he found him very useful to him as a servant; but as he belonged to another, he would not retain him without his consent, but sent him back to his master whom he

had wronged; and in order to secure a favorable reception, sent with him this letter, which competent judges consider as a perfect example of good letter-writing: as containing the most lively sentiments both of humanity and generosity; and discovering inimitable dexterity and address, insomuch that it is preferred to a letter of a similar kind, written by the learned Pliny, who was so famous for epistolary writing. A letter from such a man as the holy and venerable apostle Paul, whose heart was so full of Christian piety, may be expected, though written on a temporal affair, to contain evangelical sentiments of the most useful kind; and accordingly we find in it much matter of the most edifying nature. We shall, in the consideration of it, attend to two things.

The character of Onesimus before his conversion; and

The great change that was wrought in him by the grace of God, with the evidences thereof.

Let us first consider the character of Onesimus before his conversion.

It appears from this epistle that he was a slave—a servant of the lowest description, one who was bought with money, and entirely at the disposal of his master. This was allowed by the law of Moses; and we here see a good man having a servant of this description in his house. No doubt he was treated, not with rigor and severity, but with Christian kindness and compassion; nevertheless slavery seems to be incompatible with the genius of the Gospel of Christ; and does not accord with that excellent rule, commonly called “The golden rule.”—“Whatever ye would that others should do unto you, do ye even the same to them.” Being converted to God, the apostle requests Philemon to receive him again into his family and service.

But Onesimus had not only been a servant, but “an unprofitable servant; in times past unprofitable”—that is, a worthless and injurious fellow, alluding to his name Onesimus, which signifies *profitable*: but the apostle intimates how inconsistent his character had been with his name; and, indeed, there is too often a sad disagreement between a person's name and character. How many are called by the honorable appellation of *Christians*, who are really a disgrace to their profession! which reminds us of what was once said by Alexander the Great, to a private soldier in his army, who was a worthless man, and a coward: he ordered him either to change his name, or become a better

soldier: and thus it might be said to many who are called Christians. It is doubtless the duty of servants to endeavor to render themselves *profitable* to their employers. This man, in his unconverted state, was unprofitable; but now he had become a profitable man. All servants should endeavor, by honesty, frugality, and diligence, to seek the welfare of the family in which they live; and surely this man was under double obligations to have done so, for he had a very good master; the apostle speaks very highly of him; he calls him, in the first verse, "Our dearly beloved and fellow-laborer;" he speaks in the second verse of his having "a church in his house"—that is, the little society of the faithful, who lived at Colosse, assembled for worship in his habitation; and probably the first Christian churches used to assemble in like manner in private houses. And in the sixth and seventh verses we find there were many good things in him to be acknowledged, and particularly "that the bowels of the saints were refreshed by him; so that he appears to have been a man of eminent piety; and was it not a great privilege for Onesimus to live in such a family as this? But alas! he had neglected and abused these privileges: and let it be observed, that the faults of bad servants are *double faults* when they live in good families; it makes their guilt so much the greater; for how inconsistent is their vicious conduct with the order of a pious house, in which the Scriptures are daily read, and prayers and praises offered up to God! O let servants in pious families reflect upon the privileges they enjoy, and remember they must one day give an account to God how they have improved or abused them. Gladly attend, if you live in a pious house, gladly attend to the worship of God, and do not think it a hardship; do not indulge sleep, when the Scriptures are read, or prayer is presented to God. And let not servants think themselves excused from private prayer, because they join, at least in appearance, in family prayer; rather let it be the means of teaching them how to pray, and of stirring them up to pray in private for themselves.

Further, It appears that Onesimus was a *dishonest* servant; probably he had acted the part of the thief. The apostle says in the eighth verse, "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, put that to my account." There is little doubt, though it is thus mildly expressed, that he had been a dishonest man, and had fled from justice:

but "if he oweth thee ought," says the apostle, "put it to my account"—"*impute it to me,*" (which, by the way, gives us a just notion of the meaning of the phrase "*imputed*" righteousness"—for it is the same word that is used in Rom. iv. 16. "As David also describeth both the blessedness of the man unto whom God *imputeth righteousness* without works," and in other verses to the same import.) Alas! how much dishonesty is committed in the common concerns of life; in the conduct of trade and business; in the behavior of masters and servants! As to the latter, how few make conscience of wasting their master's property, neglecting his business, idling away their time, which is a real theft, though not usually punished by human laws, but which will not escape the righteous judgment of God. But Christian servants are charged to conduct themselves in a very different manner, and especially "*not as eye-servants,*" who do nothing well but when they are watched; but performing every branch of their duty "as to the Lord, and not as unto men."

Further, This man was a fugitive, a run-away servant; he deserts the business and house of his master, which was itself a robbery, for he was not at his own disposal, his person being the property of Philemon: but guilt generally excites fear. So our first parents, when they sinned against God, strove to hide themselves from his presence among the trees of the garden: but who can flee from God? "Whither shall we go from his presence?" "There is no darkness, neither shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." Besides, "God will bring every secret thing into judgment; whether it be good or whether it be bad." Then, if not before, will that Scripture be verified, "Be sure your sin will find you out." Onesimus, in his rambles, comes to Rome, which was a very great city; and like great cities in general, the very sink of iniquity. Great offenders often flee to similar places, to hide themselves amidst the multitude of a populous city. Oh, having lost character and employment, he might have gone thither for the purpose of committing further depredations. And here, we might have expected him to have become worse and worse; but, "God's thoughts are not as our thoughts!" God was pleased to overrule his crime, and his coming thither, as the means of his being converted to God. And this is the second thing we are to consider.

Let us now attend to the great change

that was wrought by the grace of God on the heart of Onesimus, and the evidences that were given of that change.

The apostle Paul was then a prisoner in Rome. Having appealed to Cæsar, from the Jews, he was brought, after very great perils and difficulties, to that immense city; and there, the Lord so interposed in his favor, that he continued two whole years, and was permitted to preach in his own hired house, to all those who chose to repair to it: and there, though he was prevented from going on with his beloved work of spreading the Gospel in new places, and travelling from one country to another for that purpose, yet he was permitted to write those admirable epistles to the Ephesians, to the Colossians, to the Philippians, and others; so that though there were some hundred sermons prevented by his imprisonment, yet there have been millions edified by his writings.—There is not a sabbath-day passes—there is hardly a sermon that is preached throughout the Christian world—there is hardly a congregation convened at any time, that does not derive great advantage from the writings of that holy man of God. We have reason to admire the grace of God thus overruling the wickedness of men. Nor was he useless in that great city; he was not useless in preaching; there were Christians in Rome, to be sure, before Paul went there; but probably they were greatly revived, and multiplied too, by his preaching; for he says, in the close of one of his epistles, “All the saints salute you, chiefly those that are of *Cæsar’s household*.”—Into the house of *Nero*, the cruel tyrant, the grace of God found its way, and had its due effect upon those who were living in the midst of wickedness. Onesimus came to hear him. What could induce such a man as Onesimus to go to Paul’s house to hear him? Perhaps curiosity. Curiosity has brought many a man to hear the Gospel; and though it be a poor unworthy motive; God has overruled it for good. So Zaccheus climbed the sycamore-tree, for no better purpose than to see what sort of a person Jesus was; but the Lord, that very day, brought salvation to his house and to his heart. Thus it was with Onesimus. Perhaps some acquaintance might have invited him to go to hear—one who had met with profit under Paul’s preaching; and it is very commendable for persons who have found benefit from the word, to invite their friends to come and hear it also. Many have been converted to God by this means. It is not improbable that Onesimus might have heard the

Apostle Paul preach at his master’s house; he had perhaps heard his doctrine and witnessed his behavior, he had probably listened to his conversation; and there is something so attractive in the truth, in holiness, and in zeal for God, that some persons, though wicked, cannot help feeling a reverence for it; yea, there is something in the preaching of the Gospel so much superior to any other preaching, that some who do not understand or believe it, feel an attachment to it, and hear it almost against their will. May it please God to visit such with its power! This is the case with many servants who have attended the Gospel because their masters or mistresses did so, and could scarcely forsake it afterwards, though they knew not why.

This man, however, was “born of God;” the Apostle says of him, ver. 10, “Whom I have begotten in my bonds;” he also calls him his son, “my son Onesimus.”—This mode of expression is common in Scripture. It is said in James i. 18, “God, of his own will, begat us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures;” and the Apostle Paul says the same to the Corinthians, “In Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the Gospel.” In all ages God has employed the preaching of his Gospel as the principal, though not the only means of the conversion of sinners; the preaching of the cross is “the power of God to salvation.” “The weapons of our warfare,” says the Apostle, “are not carnal, but they are mighty through God, to the pulling down of the strong holds of the devil.” Now, this man renounces the hidden things of dishonesty, and he shows, by sufficient and satisfactory evidence, that he has become a new creature. Let us inquire a little into this evidence.

Paul, we see, had the fullest satisfaction in him; he speaks with the greatest certainty concerning him; and scruples not to recommend him in the warmest manner. In the first place, as an evidence that he was really changed, we mention his confession of his former wickedness: for doubtless he did make confession of it; or how did the apostle come to know it? He knew nothing of this man; he had never seen him in this great city; but grace always humbles the subject of it; it always leads him to an acknowledgment of sin. It is likely that this man had come forward and made himself known to the apostle. Methinks I see him, with a bashful countenance, approaching this man of God, saying, “Perhaps, Sir, you do not know me; but I remember you when you was at

Colosse, at my master's house. I had a good master, Sir, Onesimus, your friend; but I have been a bad servant. I have wronged him, and fled hither: but by the grace of God, through your preaching, I have been brought to repentance; and have come to break my mind to you, and to take your advice."—My brethren, it would be a great consolation to the ministers of the Gospel, if persons who have received benefit from their preaching, would make it known to them; it would render them more happy and more useful, if they knew in what manner their preaching had been blessed.

Another evidence of his conversion was his willingness to return to his master, for no doubt he was perfectly willing to do so, and Paul did not write to this effect without his consent; he was willing to go back, and humble himself before his master, whom he knew, being a good man, would be glad to receive him, if he had evidence of his being changed, which evidence he would have by this admirable letter of the Apostle Paul. No doubt, true penitence is always accompanied with a desire to make restitution. If a man has wronged another, true penitence will make him wish to undo the evil he has done, as much as possible: and in matters of dishonesty, I should think little of any man's religion, or pretended repentance, who did not find some means to make restitution. This is doubtless the duty of every man, and if the party wronged is deceased, then to his family: or if that be not possible, then it should be made to God and the poor.

But the Apostle says he had been "unprofitable, but now he is profitable both to thee and to me." Pious servants will make themselves profitable; and let that pretended piety be deemed good for nothing, and mere hypocrisy, that does not lead servants to be good servants, in the family where they live,—honest, obliging, industrious; then they will be *profitable*: for a good servant is a great blessing to a family, and a bad servant is a real curse. Now also he had become profitable to the Apostle; perhaps his love to the servant of Christ, from whom he had derived so great a benefit, induced him to offer his service to this poor prisoner of the Lord, to do his errands, and serve him in every possible way; and Christians will esteem it their privilege to show respect and affection to those ministers from whom they have derived spiritual advantage.

Further. Observe the Apostle's great regard for this man. He calls him his

"Son,"—he calls him his "Brother beloved,"—he calls him his "Bowels." All these epithets are expressions of Christian love and kindness to a child of God. This shows us, likewise, that in spiritual concerns, God is no respecter of persons. "In Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female, bond nor free,"—there were great distinctions of this sort under the Old Testament dispensation, but not now; Christ is "all and in all," nor was the humble condition or poverty of this man any reason for the Apostle's thinking the less of him. "Hearken (says St. James) my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"—Oh how valuable is the acquisition of one immortal soul!—What is Onesimus? A slave!—a dishonest slave!—a runaway slave!—but no sooner is he a partaker of the grace of God, than he is "a brother beloved;" yea, the Apostle speaks of him as "his own bowels,"—so tender is the regard he feels for this man. Hence the conversion of one soul, of whatever degree the person is—the conversion of one soul is an event of great importance, in the eye of faith, to the man who looks forward to an eternity of existence in heaven—the conversion of one soul is a matter of much greater importance than the revolution of a kingdom or of an empire.

And see how the grace of God obliterates, and blots out former offences! Paul seems almost to have forgotten what the man *was*—he looks at what he *is*,—a brother beloved in Christ Jesus; and this is agreeable to the genius of the Gospel. "What think ye? says Christ, if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, does he not leave the ninety and nine, and go into the mountains, and seek that which has gone astray? and, is there not joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth? and if there be joy in heaven, shall there not also be joy on earth?" God, of his infinite mercy, passes by and forgets all the offences of those who believe in his dear Son; it is a branch of the covenant of grace, "their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more;" and as it is expressed in one of the Prophets, in Ezekiel, xviii. 21. "If the wicked turn from all the sins that he hath committed, and keep my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall not die; he shall surely live: all his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned to him." And here also Paul gives us a striking example of brotherly love. Dearly as he loved Onesimus,

now a converted man, and very useful to him, he will not retain him; he is the property of Philemon, and therefore he parts with him; and not only so, but he sends a letter, containing all the arguments that ingenuity could devise, in order to serve this man, and to secure for him a kind reception. He restores him to his master, assured that by the grace of God he will become a truly valuable servant.

Now to conclude. Let us, in the first place, admire the wise providence of God, in overruling all human events, and sometimes even the sins and follies of men, for their everlasting advantage. God permitted this man Onesimus to do what he did; he permitted him to run away to Rome, and there the grace of God found him out—so Joseph was sold into Egypt; it was a vile transaction; but after many remarkable events, when Joseph made himself known to his brethren, and when they were troubled at his presence, Joseph said to them, “Come near to me, I pray you: and they came near him, and he said, ‘I am Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt! Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God sent me before you to preserve life, to preserve your posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance; so now, it was not you that sent me hither, but God.’” O what benefits did they ultimately derive from this act to their brother! and thus it often happens, in the mysterious proceedings of divine Providence, causing the wrath and even the guilt of man to praise him.”

But again, Let us adore the riches of sovereign and almighty grace, as manifested in this man. Surely it must be admitted that here was a man “saved by *grace*.” By what else could he be saved? and it might truly be said of him that “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” O how remarkable is the event, when you reflect both on the preacher and the convert! Who was the preacher? Once a persecutor of the saints: and who was the convert? A converted thief!

See also the genuine effects of true grace! This man, who had been unprofitable, yea, more than unprofitable, this man, who had been extremely injurious, becomes, not only a partaker of mercy for himself, but he becomes a useful man to others; he was useful to Paul, and no doubt he was useful afterwards to his old master Philemon; and perhaps many in the town would near of it, and be induced to say, “What a marvellous change is wrought in this man! How did it come about?” Some think that

minister of the Gospel. O what a blessed alteration grace makes, and if it produce a change in a man’s heart, it will certainly produce a change in his conduct also.

Further, let pious persons from hence derive encouragement as to their ungodly relations and friends. It may be that while I have been speaking of Onesimus, your thoughts have been travelling to some spot or other, where your relations live, with regard to whom you have reason to entertain fear as to their eternal state. Think then of Onesimus, and offer up incessant prayer to God for them; for nothing is too hard for the Lord: none are beyond the reach of divine grace.

Finally—Let this subject recommend to all men the use of the means of grace. Let it recommend the hearing of the Gospel of Christ. How did all this change happen? It was doubtless by the special grace and power of the Spirit of God, but then it was through the instrumentality of the word. We should therefore be encouraged to bring all we can to hear the word of God; and let nothing be done to discourage the worst of men from coming to hear it, even such as show that they hate and despise it: yet let them attend. Who can tell what God may effect by the teaching of his Holy Spirit? What is the language of wisdom? “Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.” Yet let none presume upon future times and opportunities, these we cannot command; but this we know that “now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation.”

PRAYER.—To thee, our Lord, we are, and must ever be, unprofitable servants. By us thou canst gain nothing; we receive every thing from thee. What can our utmost love and zeal render to thee, that is not our duty as thy dependent creatures? But, alas! instead of being faithful, we have been slothful servants; nay, instead of servants, we have been rebels and traitors against thee. And wilt thou receive such wretches into thy family? Canst thou accept us, not as servants, but as children, and as heirs? Yes, as joint heirs with Jesus Christ! So unsearchable is thy grace in him, that thou wouldest not be faithful and just to thy word, didst thou not forgive them who confess their sins before thee. O cleanse us, then, from all unrighteousness!—fit us for thy holy service, and vouchsafe to employ us in it. Impart the Spirit of thy Son to our hearts, that we may cry Abba, Father! Against thee we have rebelled: to others we have been injurious: henceforth, O Lord, may we be devoted to thy praise, who callest us from darkness to marvellous light; and may we prove our gratitude for thine unmerited and abounding mercy, by aiming to be profitable to others, and especially to the household of Christ. To him be glory for ever Amen.

SERMON LXXXV.

SUPERABOUNDING GRACE.

Romans, v. 20. (latter part.) Where Sin abounded, Grace did much more abound.

SIN and GRACE are two of the most comprehensive words in our language. Hell and heaven are connected with these two things, as Cause and Effect. Sin leads only to hell, and grace alone can lead to heaven:—surely, then, it becomes us to be well acquainted with the nature of sin, which is the spring of misery, and with grace, which is the fountain of eternal life. Much is said of both these in a masterly manner, by the Apostle of the Gentiles in his admirable epistle to the Romans, and especially in this chapter. To exalt Christ, was his constant aim, and he makes a beautiful comparison, or rather a contrast, between the first and the second Adam; wherein he proves that the grace of Christ was more powerful to save than the sin of Adam was to destroy; and he sums up the whole in the words of our text.

These words naturally divide themselves into two parts,

The awful abounding of sin, and

The superabounding of grace.

Let us first attend to the awful abounding of sin; and here allow me to premise that this is a subject upon which we ought to enter with solemn awe; all the evils that we feel, or fear, proceed from sin. If pain and sorrow, death and the grave, hell and everlasting burnings, are awful, then must sin be deemed a horrible evil, for sin is the source from which they all proceed: and let me remind you that this is a subject in which every one of you is concerned; because all are sinners, whether they know it or not, and our sins will prove our ruin, if grace prevent it not, if this grace do not abound above and beyond all our sins.

What is sin? Few it may be feared have right notions of it. To swear, and be drunken, to rob, or to murder, is allowed by all men to be sinful; that which ruins a man's reputation, or injures society, is allowed to be evil; but much that is deemed innocent by man, is abominable in the sight of God. Sin cannot be rightly known, but by an acquaintance with the holy law of God, for "sin is the transgression of the law, it is disobedience to that authority, which cannot be disputed: and if no evil were to arise from sin by way of punishment in the present world, or in that which is to come, still sin would be a detestable evil. Yes, persons may

think that some sins are but trivial evils. Such, they may suppose, was eating of the forbidden fruit; and what was the evil of that sin, but disobedience against God, a defying the divine authority? and that is the real evil of sin which true penitents will always readily acknowledge, as a great transgressor once did, when he said, "Against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." Sin is an evil not only because it is injurious to society, but because it is an act of rebellion against God: it is undermining the divine government; and therefore it cannot but be hateful to Him, whose law is holy, and just and good." We must therefore be somewhat acquainted with the divine law, if we would entertain just notions of sin. St. Paul says that "he was alive, without the law, once;" that is, when he was a proud self-righteous Pharisee, but, "when the commandment came,"—when he understood the purity and spirituality of the law, he perceived, that he was a notorious and guilty sinner, condemned by the law of God. Indeed, this holy law condemns *all* men; for "whatever the law saith it saith to them that are under the law, that *every* mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God," and the law thus understood will plainly show how awfully sin abounds. Let us consider this in a few particulars—"sin abounds."

This appears in the first place from its extensive prevalence. It is not a *local* evil like many natural evils, confined to one place, or limited to one age; but, it is an universal mischief; from the beginning until now, it has continued in its full force; and wherever human beings have been discovered, there it has been found that sin has reigned. The Apostle has shown us in the first and second chapters of this masterly epistle, that the whole world is in a state of condemnation; it is a rebellious universe, the whole species is up in arms against God. However men may differ in their customs and manners,—men who never heard of each other, you will find, wherever you go, that sin reigns.

This appears also from the immense number of sins that are constantly committed. If we include, as we ought, our sins of omission, and our sins of thought,—who can enumerate his errors! With regard to the dispositions of our minds,—we are commanded to love God with all our heart, and soul, and strength; and if we fall short of this, then we are transgressors. How many thousands of sins

are committed in the imagination, from which perhaps no external act proceeds; "but the imaginations of the thoughts of men's hearts are only evil, continually." Gen. vi. 5. From the first dawn of reason, through infancy, childhood, youth, and riper years, even to the end of human life, we are offending against God. We behold the workings of sin, envy, pride, and rage, even in little infants. In short, we "are estranged from the womb, we go astray as soon as we be born, speaking lies;" if these evils be continued for forty, fifty, sixty, or seventy years, how are our sins multiplied! We may well say, "Innumerable evils have compassed us about; our iniquities have taken hold upon us, so that we are not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of our head; therefore our hearts fail us." Psalm xl. 12.

Consider, further, the eagerness with which men sin; the earnestness with which they commit transgression. There is sin in our nature; the seeds of sin are in our constitution; but how are our iniquities cultivated by art! they become, as it were, a trade; "the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil;" the Scriptures represent men to be sinning "as with a cart-rope;" "with both hands earnestly;" and what plans are formed for the execution of it! "man drinketh in iniquity like water," and some "sell themselves to do evil." Their language is, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die," and their sole object is "to fulfil the lusts of the flesh."

In some seasons and in some places, iniquity unusually abounds; and persons arrive at a certain pitch of wickedness, beyond which God will not suffer them to go. Thus it was with the Canaanites, and the Amorites; with Sodom and Gomorrah; and with the Jews also; they "fill up the measure of their iniquities," till there be no remedy.

Consider also, the aboundings of sin in the aggravations of them. Some sins are extremely heinous in themselves; others are aggravated by the circumstances under which they are committed; thus, no doubt, Judas, with the knowledge he possessed, was far more criminal than Pilate. When sins are committed against knowledge, then are they aggravated. All sinners are "without excuse," but some are more inexcusable than others: and how great must *our* sins be, considering the light and knowledge we have in this land of Bibles, and where there are so many godly ministers, who, like faithful watchmen, cry aloud, and point out to sinners their dan-

ger! Religious education tends greatly to aggravate the sins of those who continue in them; the sins of such persons are not like the sins of others who have lived all their days in careless, ungodly families; but, where the worship of God is maintained, day by day, and instruction afforded by pious parents, those who continue in iniquity, abusing such advantages, are sinners of the deepest dye. And when sins are committed against the special goodness and mercy of God, they are also greatly aggravated. This is the condition of many to whom God may say as to the Jews of old, "Hear O heaven, and give ear O earth, for I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." God is good to all,— "the earth is full of the riches of his goodness; he opens his hand, and supplies the want of every living thing:" but, O how is all this goodness of God abused! Let us consider what God has done for us, in making us rational creatures, capable of knowing and serving him: he has furnished us with all the members of body, and all the powers of the mind; has spread our table, and filled our cup, and rendered the whole creation tributary to our comfort; he has indulged us with a thousand delights; the clear shining of the sun; the pleasing light of the moon; the charming songs of the birds; the sweet fragrance of the flowers; the higher pleasures of domestic life,—the attention and affections of our dear relations. He has also granted us time and space for repentance; we have received many faithful warnings, many kind invitations; we have repeatedly felt conviction of our sin and misery, with which we have trifled; we have made many resolutions of amendment in times of sickness, which we have as frequently broken; we have escaped dangers by land and by water; we have had many admonitions by the death of friends, and yet, perhaps, we are continuing in sin to the present moment. O how does sin abound!

Sin will appear to abound, if you advert to the calamitous effects which it has produced. The great and blessed God would not suffer his creatures to endure so much misery as they do, if he were not greatly displeased by their sins. The earth is cursed for man's sake; thorns and thistles it spontaneously produces; but bread must be produced by the sweat of his brow. How many are doomed to severe labor in the fields and in the mines! The mariner who plows the boisterous ocean; the wretched slave who toils in the burning

field; all the labors and all the miseries of man prove that he is a sinful creature. Observe the disorder of the elements; the horrid glare of lightning; the terrific peals of thunder; the deluges of water; the sickening heat of sultry climes; the destructive winds; and the tremendous earthquake. Must not sin have abounded, to occasion these abounding mischiefs?

The prudence of man in framing human laws is another proof of the same truth. Why are bonds and oaths necessary in our affairs? Why must we have locks, and bolts, and bars to our habitations? Why must we have judges and magistrates, prisons and gibbets? The reason is that sin so much abounds.

Recollect also the numerous and painful diseases which invade the human frame; visit hospitals, sick chambers, madhouses, and other receptacles of human misery; and behold in them all a convincing proof that man has sinned, and that God is angry. Yea, brethren, look a little farther, and contemplate the end of all men. There you have the strongest proof imaginable of the evil of sin; it has brought death into the world; "it is appointed to all men once to die; the body must see corruption; must return to the earth from whence it was taken." O then how does sin abound!

Before we proceed to the second part of the subject, let us make a pause. Let us not dismiss this serious topic without feeling its weight; let us be concerned to know this humbling truth, and to know it for ourselves; let the general doctrine come home to our hearts with the message of Nathan—"Thou art the man!" Surely, if we admit the truth of the Scriptures, we must confess that we are miserable sinners, and that, in our own case, sin has indeed abounded. This disposition of mind is pleasing to God, for to this man, he has promised to look, "even to him who is of an humble and contrite spirit, who trembles at his word." Blessed is the man that is "poor in spirit," who mourneth for his sin. Fools only make a mock of sin, but those who are truly wise, have a most humbling sensibility of their abounding transgressions and unworthiness.

Let us now proceed to the second part of our subject. We have seen, (shall we say we have *felt*?) that *sin* abounds: let us now contemplate the superaboundings of grace. Grace is a term but little known and rarely mentioned except in a way of contempt. "Grace" signifies "the free favor of God" towards sinful and undeserving creatures; and it stands opposed, in Scripture, to the merit or wages of works

performed, as in Ephes. ii. 8, 9. "By grace are ye saved—not of works, lest any man should boast." It is carefully distinguished from that which might be thought meritorious, as in Rom. vi. 23. "The wages of sin is death; but the *gift* of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." The doctrine of human merit is indeed flattering to the pride of man; but it is totally contrary to the grand principle of the Gospel, which forbids all flesh to glory before God, and to ascribe the whole of salvation to pure unmerited mercy.

In the whole business of salvation, from first to last, grace abounds. It originates in the heart of God, who pitied us in our low estate; and devised a plan of salvation, to us perfectly easy, to himself highly honorable. It was God, who, unasked, presented to the world that "unspeakable gift," his only-begotten Son, in human nature; "for God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son." "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Grace is charmingly displayed in the glorious person, and the perfect work of the Son of God; "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich;" and because we, whom he designed to save, were partakers of flesh and blood, he partook of the same nature, and submitted to the deepest humiliation on our behalf. "The foxes," said he, "have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Such was his grace, that he patiently endured the contradiction of sinners against himself; and suffered, in a manner, which it is impossible to describe. Who can conceive what were the agonies of his holy soul, when he sweat, as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground? or, when bleeding to death on the cross, he exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In this obedience unto death, of Christ, consisted that righteousness, by which all believers are justified; and which, in the 19th verse of this chapter, is opposed to the disobedience of Adam, in whom we fell. "For as by one man's *disobedience* many were made sinners; so by the *obedience* of one shall many be made righteous."

Thus grace may be said to abound in the Gospel of Christ, which, on that account, is itself called "the grace of God." St. Paul, writing to Titus, says, "the

grace of God that bringeth salvation—teacheth us to live soberly,” &c.—doubtless, he means that we are so instructed by the Gospel. And in another place, writing to the Corinthians, he says, “We beseech you, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain,”—that is, that ye neglect not to accept, and improve by the Gospel preached to you. And well may the Gospel bear this name, for it is the principal design of God in the Gospel to display this wonderful grace, and to show how richly it abounds in the salvation of sinners: every page is full of it; nor does that deserve the name of Gospel in which it does not obviously abound.

Farther. Grace exceedingly abounds in the free and full justification of the sinner, who believes. St. Paul, describing his own case in the first epistle to Timothy, chapter the first, and the fourteenth verse, says,—after mentioning his former depravity and guilt, “the grace of our Lord was *exceeding abundant*, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” He was surprised and astonished when he reflected on the free favor of God, bestowed upon so great a transgressor. And in the last verse of this chapter, wishing to extol the grace of God as highly as possible, he says, “that, as sin reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Here he compares grace to a mighty monarch—Grace *reigns*, presides, and governs with majestic superiority, in the grand affair of human salvation, worthy of the highest honors.

One idea more is necessary; it is not only said that “grace abounds,” but that it “much more abounds.” We have endeavored to show that sin does awfully abound; but the apostle says, that though sin does abound, yet grace does “much more abound:” and he not only speaks of a likeness between the first and second Adam, but he also speaks of that which is not alike, verse 15. “But not as the offence, so also is the free gift: for if through the offence of one many be dead; much more, the grace of God, and the gift by grace, hath abounded unto many: and not as it was by one that sinned, so the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification:” the meaning of which seems to be that we derive more from Christ than we lost in Adam. No doubt, the condition to which God will finally raise his saints in the heavenly world, will be far superior to that which man enjoyed in his original state; and the soul, clothed

with the righteousness of God our Savior, will shine with greater lustre than Adam ever did in his own primitive righteousness.

“Clothed in this robe, how bright I shine!

“Angels might envy such a dress.

“Angels have not a robe like mine—

“The robe of Jesus’ righteousness!

“It doth not yet appear, what we shall be; but we know that when the Savior shall appear, we shall be like him;” we shall be made kings and priests unto God; we shall be raised to a state of dignity and glory, sitting down with Christ himself upon his throne of glory. “Such honor will have all his saints!” And thus it will appear, in a manner we cannot yet fully comprehend, that “where sin abounded, the grace of God doth much more abound.”

IMPROVEMENT.

To conclude—Let us diligently study the doctrine of grace. “It is a good thing that the heart be established in grace”—in the doctrine of grace: for true religion does not consist in outward ceremonies, even those of God’s appointment; it is something infinitely superior. Let us therefore “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ;” this will be found the best, the most useful, and the most delightful kind of knowledge; and those who have acquired it, will say with the Apostle, “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ and be found in him.”

Let us be concerned, above all things, to be partakers of this grace. Be not content to hear of it, as persons unconcerned, but seek to be personally partakers of it. Shall we neglect it? Shall we suffer any of the concerns of this life, however pressing, or any of its enjoyments, however pleasing, to divert our souls from this greatest of all concerns? God forbid!

———“It were contemning

“With impious self-sufficient arrogance,

“The bounty of our God, not to accept

“With every mark of honor—such a gift!”

Awfully, indeed, are they mistaken who would substitute any thing in its stead; or put their own works of righteousness in the place of the righteousness of Christ. And what will poor sinners do at the last day without this grace? O consider, that death is at hand, and what an awful thing will it be to die without the grace of God. Your sins, alas! have abounded, and will

not deserved punishment also abound? It will, unless this grace shall superabound. Seek it then by earnest prayer, "seek and ye shall find."

What a source is here of consolation, even for the chief of sinners! Does guilt oppress your conscience, and fears alarm your souls? Are you saying—"You know not what a sinner I have been—singular—excessive in sinning." It may be so. I know that you cannot overrate your sins, but mark the encouraging words of our text—"Where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound:" and why should it not be so in your case?

What abundant cause is here for praise—ardent, constant praise! If Abraham, at a distance, saw the day of Christ and was glad, how much more cause have you, believer, who have tasted that the Lord is actually gracious, to rejoice in his salvation! Adopt then the prophet's language of exultation. Isaiah lxi. 10. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness."

Finally. This subject furnishes us with a mighty incentive to holiness. "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" The Apostle offers this query, because he knew that this objection would be started, but he replies, "God forbid! how shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein." Rather, let grace constrain us, cheerfully and sincerely, to devote ourselves, body, soul, and spirit, to the honor and glory of the God of all grace, which is, indeed, "our reasonable service."

PRAYER.—AMIDST abounding sin, how could we, O Lord, presume to call upon thee, if thy word did not assure us that thy grace still more abounds. To sin alone we can attribute the evils under which all creation groans. Thou hast warned us also of a world, in which sin abounds unspeakably more than in this:—a world, where grace is *not* proclaimed as it is to us. Blessed be thy name, that we are yet exhorted to flee from that state of wrath to which every sin we commit brings us nearer. May we flee before it is too late, to lay hold for hope on the refuge that is set before us by the Gospel of our gracious Redeemer! We praise thee, that thou hast laid our help on one who is mightier to save than all our enemies are to destroy. When our first parents involved all their posterity in corruption and death, thou, O God, and Savior, tookest on thyself our redemption. Thou savest us, not only from our natural pollution, but from all our acquired depravity,—all the guilt of our numberless and aggravated offences. Thou restorest us from the grave, not to an earthly Paradise, but to a heavenly and unchangeable inheritance! Blessing, honor, glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever! Amen.

SERMON LXXXVI.

JERUSALEM LAMENTED.

Luke, xix. 41, 42. And when he was come near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

JESUS CHRIST had a tender heart. Compassion to the miserable was the leading feature of his character. At all times, we observe this in his conduct towards the children of sorrow; this was his prevailing disposition; he was himself "a man of sorrows," and he had always an ear to listen to the tale of woe, a heart to feel for the afflicted, and a hand to afford them relief. But the display of his compassion, at the time referred to in the text, deserves particular attention; for what were his circumstances, when he thus wept, and uttered these pathetic words? It was at the only season of his sojourning here upon earth, that we behold him enjoying any kind of triumph: he was approaching Jerusalem for the last time, when a vast multitude of people, perhaps more than a million, were in that great city; numbers of whom had come from Galilee, and other parts of the country, to celebrate the feast of the passover. Having heard that he was about to enter the metropolis, in a more public manner than he ever did before, they were overjoyed with the thought of seeing him, hearing him, and beholding his miracles: so that, in great multitudes, they went forth to meet him. This more than usual curiosity was excited by a miracle which he had recently performed: he had raised Lazarus, his friend, from the dead, at a little town not far from Jerusalem:—there were many respectable witnesses of the fact; it was noised about the country, and great multitudes had been induced to believe upon him, as it is said, in the 12th chapter of St. John, "Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away and believed on Jesus; and on the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm-trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." And as you see in the 37th verse of this chapter, "when he was come nigh, even at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice, and praise God with a loud voice, for all the mighty works that they had seen."

The acclamations of the multitude, however, did not elate him; "he knew what

was in man," and he foresaw that many of the multitude who were now crying "Hosanna," would as loudly cry, "Crucify him, crucify him." Let us also beware of placing much confidence upon human applause; for a very little matter will turn the scale of public opinion, and the warm friend of to-day may be the bitter enemy of to-morrow. Other thoughts occupied the holy, the benevolent mind of Jesus. From a small distance, he commanded a view of this great city; great in extent, population, and magnificence; great especially on account of the sumptuous temple that was there erected; and, although the Savior had already suffered many hardships from the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and well knew that he should suffer still more in a few days; yet, such was his divine benevolence and compassion, that, forgetting himself, he bitterly wept at the foresight of those dire and unparalleled calamities which he knew would, in a few years, befall that guilty and devoted city; for, as he says in the 43d verse, "the days shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side; and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children with thee." All this actually came to pass; and the Romans, who besieged Jerusalem, thought it necessary to build a wall, extending nearly five miles, entirely round the city, to prevent its inhabitants from escaping; and by reducing them to famine, and other means, bringing upon them irretrievable ruin, so that in a course of time, more than a million of Jews were put to death: eleven thousand of them were crucified, and they only stopped crucifying them because no more wood could be procured to make crosses; while many of those who were not put to death were sold at a penny a man. Our Lord foresaw all this, and he wept. But doubtless he looked further than to the destruction of Jerusalem; he looked forward to the eternal state of the multitude. Probably, far the greatest part of this multitude, "died in their sins;" and he also looked to the future consequences of this destruction and consequent dispersion of the nation; he foresaw what would befall the devoted race of Judah for 1800 years; during which, the far greater part have died in ignorance and sin. Well might he, who foresaw all this, weep; he wept, amidst his own meek triumphs; far more concerned for others than himself; and notwithstanding the foresight of his own approaching sufferings, as he afterwards said to some of the women who lamented his fate, "Weep

not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."

Now the case of Jerusalem speaks aloud to us. There are things which belong to our peace; there is a limited season in which we may acquire the knowledge of these things; and there is a worse destruction than that of the Jews awaiting us, if we finally disregard them. These are the three parts of our intended discourse.

First. There are some things which are absolutely necessary to be known, in order to our eternal peace, "if thou hadst known the things which belong to thy peace."

"That the soul be without knowledge," said the most knowing of mankind, "is not good;" for, indeed, "it is eternal life to know God, and his Son Jesus Christ." What are the things that must needs be known? They are "the things of the Gospel;" "the things of God;" "the things of the Spirit of God,"—so they are denominated in Scripture. These were the things which Christ and his apostles had set before the Jews: and these are the things which the great God now sets before us; especially, the things which relate to the salvation of our souls by Jesus Christ. It is necessary to know the *doctrine* of the Gospel, the *power* of the Gospel, and the *practice* of the Gospel.—But to mention a very few particulars.

It is necessary that we should know our real state and condition as sinners; as being apostate, depraved, polluted, and helpless creatures. Great is the value and utility of self-knowledge, especially in religion. To know ourselves aright, we must know that we are "by nature, children of wrath;" for "the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." We must be convinced of our actual guilt, and that we are under the curse of the broken law; for "it is written—Cursed is every one, that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." We must so know these things that "our mouth must be stopped, and we must become confessedly guilty before God;" we must know that "the wages of sin is death;" we must not plead for sin as many do, for "the end of these things is death." We must know our own helplessness, or inability, by any thing within our own power, to relieve ourselves; for "we have destroyed ourselves, and our help is found in God alone." This doctrine of Scripture we must understand as applied to ourselves; and we must be sincerely and habitually concerned to be delivered from

this state. This must be the grand desire of our souls,—the “one thing needful,”—so as to induce us, from the heart, to cry, “God be merciful to us sinners.” It is necessary to our true and spiritual peace, that our natural and carnal peace should be disturbed; that the security we feel through ignorance should be terminated; for “while the strong man armed keepeth the house, and all things remain in peace,” we seek not the salvation that is from above; but this peace being happily disturbed, we are glad to seek peace from another quarter.

Besides this, we must have an acquaintance with the Gospel of Christ, as affording us the only, and the all-sufficient remedy—we must be acquainted with the Gospel in order to know the way of peace with God, and safety to the soul; and this is abundantly revealed in the Gospel. Christ alone is our peace-maker; he has “made peace by the blood of his cross;” “God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their iniquities.” Jesus having been “made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we who believe might be made the righteousness of God in him;” and, as St. Paul tells us in the 5th of Romans, and at the beginning, it is by “being justified through faith, that we come into a state of peace with God,” “we have access,”—free admission and introduction into an excellent and permanent state of full acceptance with God, as persons acquitted of every charge, and brought into a condition of safety and honor, so that we may “rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” These are some of the things that belong to your peace, and things that must be known.

Secondly. There is a certain, limited season, in which the knowledge of these things may be acquired. Our Lord says, in the text, “If thou hadst known, even *in this thy day.*” The Jews had *their* day; their season of visitation; for, “at sundry times, and in divers manners, did God speak unto them by the prophets; and latterly, he spoke unto them by his Son from heaven.” “If thou hadst known,” says the Lord, “even thou, *Jerusalem!* O highly favored place, distinguished as it was above all the cities upon the earth,”—if *thou* hadst known—and may not this be applied to our case, as a nation singularly favored of God, with the means of religious light and information? May it not be said to many a person here present, “If *thou* hadst known?” May it not be said to those who have had a religious education—who have had opportunities, from

their childhood, to become acquainted with the things that belong to their peace—“If *thou* hadst known?” Surely, to such, they should be known, at least, now, “after so long a time.” Now, if not before; at least, *now!*

The Jews had long enjoyed the means of grace; but the season of visitation was then drawing to a close—about forty years, and there would be a complete end. They had treated the Gospel with contempt, and, as our Lord declared, “they should go their way, and should seek him, but they should not find him.”

But we may apply the term “day,” to peculiar and favorable seasons—“If thou hadst known, in this thy day.”

In the first place, *LIFE*, generally, may be called “a day;” indeed it is but a day; a short day, and a winter’s day; but it ought to be a working day—“If thou hadst known in this *thy day.*” “Are there not twelve hours in which men should work?” how is it then that some continue “idle all the day long,” when this is the great business of life—“the one thing needful!” It is said, by the wise man, most emphatically, “the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and, to depart from evil, is understanding;” and Solomon, at the close of his book of Wisdom, having solemnly and repeatedly declared the vanity of the world, says, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man,”—*the whole* of man (for the word duty is supplied) this is the *great concern*; the interest, business, and life of man.

I may say likewise that *YOUTH* is the season in which it is peculiarly proper to attend to the things which belong to our peace; “Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth.” What can be more reasonable and proper than that the first and chief of all objects, should have the first and chief regard; and doubtless the season of youth is the most suitable and friendly for this purpose. There are infirmities and hindrances which occur to the aged, who are constrained to say of their latter days, “there is no pleasure in them.” O young people, consider, I beseech you, these words of Christ as addressed to you,—if *thou* hadst known even that, in this thy day—the day of youth, and health, and activity, these important things.

Further, let me observe that the *SABBATH* is a very proper and favorable season for attending to these great concerns. On this holy day, persons have not the same

excuses as on other days. There is no pressure of those worldly affairs which must be regarded on other days: but the "things that belong to our peace" are, if I may so say, "the order of the day," and nothing ought to interfere with them; especially when they are presented to our minds by the preaching of the Gospel. They are then brought, as it were, before our eyes, so that as the Scripture speaks, we need not say, Who shall ascend into heaven to bring them down, or who shall dive into the deep to fetch them up? "*The word is nigh thee; it is in thy mouth, and in thy heart, even the word of faith which we preach.*" Let the hearer of the Gospel know this, that the kingdom of God is brought near up to him. God, angels, and devils too, observe what attention we pay to the heavenly message, and what effects are produced by it. Angels gladly carry the news of good impressions; and upon the conversion of sinners they gladden heaven with the tidings; and if angels could weep, (as the Lord of angels did) it would be at the folly and madness of sinful men disregarding the proposals of salvation. This time of hearing is an important time,—more important than many apprehend. To many a person it may seem a matter of indifference whether he hears the word seriously and attentively, or suffer his imagination to rove; but certain it is, that by every sermon a man hears, he is taking a step nearer to heaven or nearer to hell; he is either receiving a benefit to his soul, or he is hardening his heart.

May not these words be emphatically addressed to the AGED, "at least in this *your* day?" Verily it may be said to the aged people, "Now, or never;" hear ye the word of God, lest ye should die in your sins.

Thirdly and lastly. It is a matter of grievous lamentation when this opportunity is lost.

Our Lord when he thought of it wept; he wept when he uttered these words, "If thou hadst known, even thou—but now they are hid from thine eyes." The calamities of the Jews, which he clearly foresaw, were extremely great; they were unparalleled in the history of nations; the world, with all its troubles, never saw the like before, nor ever will again; the discord, the malice, the famine, the disease, the self-murders, the burnings of houses, and falling of buildings, the death of multitudes—all contributed to form that sum of unspeakable calamity which our Lord foresaw, and the prospect of which made him weep. But fearful as this destruction

was, yet the misery of damned souls in hell will be far greater; yea, the sufferings of each individual soul will, at some future period, have been greater than the sum total of all the sufferings, endured by the hundreds of thousands who perished in Jerusalem!—O think of eternity; think of thousands and thousands of years past, and thousands and thousands more to be added to their number; yea, millions of ages,—as many millions of ages as there have been drops of rain from the beginning of the Creation; as many millions of ages as there have been leaves upon all the trees, or sands upon the sea shore;—and supposing all these to have come, and to be past—yet, eternal ages more are still to succeed. The capacious mind of Him who was himself, from eternity, could not but weep when he contemplated these distant objects; and, surely our hearts must be as hard as stones, if we can think of them without feeling compassion both for ourselves and for others.

But *when* may it be said that these things are hid from men's eyes?

In the first place, when the means of grace are removed. The Lord threatened the church of Ephesus, when she left her first love, that "the candlestick (or lamp) should be removed out of its place;" the lamp signified the ministry of the Gospel in the church. When the Lord removes the preaching of his Gospel from a particular place, in town or country, it is an awful event. How often has it happened in such cases, that a faithful minister has been succeeded by a poor blind guide! thus also it frequently happens, in the course of human affairs, that persons have been removed from places where they heard the Gospel faithfully preached, to situations where it was not to be heard. There are many servants who hear the word in consequence of their living in pious families; but by and by they are removed, and either attend no place of worship at all, or if they do, hear nothing but error: then, alas! are these things hid from their eyes. Many there are, who, having no love for the Gospel, make no scruple of removing, for the sake of convenience, to situations where the Gospel is not preached, and then these things by their own negligence are hidden from their eyes. And, in large congregations, perhaps a Sabbath does not pass, on which some persons are hearing the truth for the last time; so that, though they may perhaps live many years after, yet they hear the Gospel no more! It is an awful thought to ministers, and ought to be so to all their hearers.

Again, these things may be said to be hidden from men's eyes when the heart becomes hard and insensible; and this is no uncommon thing. "Take heed," said the Apostle of the Gentiles, "lest your hearts be hardened, through the deceitfulness of sin." Many hearers of the word become "Sermon-proof." They have heard the solemn truths of the Scripture so frequently, and to so little purpose, that, at length, they make no impression at all. We rarely hear of the conversion of persons at an advanced period of life, who have long heard the Gospel in vain. Yet, this is not impossible, for nothing is "too hard for the Lord." Habits of sin dreadfully harden. When conscience has long remonstrated in vain, it ceases to remonstrate; and an offended God, whose patience is wearied out, may justly say to the confirmed sinner, as to Ephraim of old—"Ephraim is joined to idols—let him alone!"

Above all, it may be truly said, and with an awful emphasis, that these things are hid from men's eyes, when life is closed—closed, alas, before the great business of life is finished, or even begun; and, O how soon, and, sometimes, how suddenly does life close! for, "what is it but a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." How many instances are there of persons suddenly removed, some, it may be, sitting at the table, others walking in the streets, and others while lying on their beds, who retired to rest in usual health! And what security have you or I, that this may not be the case with us? And should not sudden death prove our lot, how often does it happen that the body is visited with such distracting pains, as entirely to prevent any serious thoughts! How often does fever almost totally incapacitate the mind for reflection! Restlessness, attention to medicine, to sleep, and so on, so occupy the mind, that after all, death comes at an unexpected moment; and when death closes the scene, then are these things hid, for ever hid from our eyes. Upon such occasions, no doubt pious relations would weep, as Christ wept upon this occasion; and how bitter must be such sorrow! O thou, my wife, my husband, my child! hadst thou but known the things that belonged to thy peace! but, I fear, that now they are hidden for ever from thine eyes. This is the bitterness of sorrow—the very "gall of bitterness." But when a relation or a friend dies "in the Lord," we feel immediate consolation, assured that our loss is his eternal gain;—I am mourning, but he

is rejoicing. On the contrary, if there be reason to fear the worst, ministers too must bitterly lament, and say, "We have all the day long stretched out our hands to a gainsaying people." "Who hath believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed!" But, if others lament this catastrophe, how must the lost soul herself lament it! this will be the very emphasis of suffering in the eternal world! O fool that I was, how did I spend my time! What was I doing all the days of my life! How came I to neglect my Bible! How could I shut my ears to the calls of ministers and friends! What wretched trifling will this life appear when the business of life was wholly neglected, and the amusements of sense occupied my time! Many a soul will say—"O had I spent my time in reading my Bible and in prayer, instead of spending it in vain conversation, amusements, and dress, I might have avoided this misery; but now, these things are hid from my eyes."

Thus I have endeavored to show you; 1. That there are things which belong to our peace; 2. That there is a limited time in which the knowledge of these things may be acquired; and 3. That it is a matter of deep lamentation when they are neglected, and are hid for ever from men's eyes.

To conclude. As these are things necessary to be known, let none then plead for ignorance, or foolishly pretend that they know enough already. This is the language of many, but it is a sure proof that as yet they know nothing as they ought. If there are things that belong to our peace, and they must be known, do we apply our hearts to wisdom? Do we know them?—especially our state by nature, and the means of salvation by Jesus Christ? Is there a limited time in which they must be known? O then seize the golden opportunity. Why should not men be as wise for eternity, as for time?—for their souls as well as for their bodies? In the management of human affairs, we seek to improve the proper season. The husbandman does this, the mechanic, the tradesman, the merchant, have all their proper seasons, and they attend to business, if they are wise men, at those proper seasons. O let us do so, in those things that belong to our peace; let us not neglect the Bible, or the means of grace, or prayer. We have now another Sabbath evening to spend; let us spend it profitably; let not these golden hours be lost in folly, but, while it is called to-day, let us hear the voice of the Son of God, and live.

Finally. Let those rejoice and be thankful, who have attended to these things, so that the great affair is settled; the great business of life is accomplished! O give praise to God for his goodness. Upon such an occasion, Christ rejoiced, and said, "Father, I thank thee, Lord of heaven and earth, that though these things are hidden from the wise and prudent, they are revealed unto babes, even so, Father, for it seemed good in thy sight;" let us praise God for his special, distinguishing grace, and give him glory, now, and for evermore. Amen.

PRAYER.—How merciful, O Lord, are the most awful warnings of thy judgments! The tears of Jesus over impenitent Jerusalem, demonstrate thy pity toward self-destroying sinners. When the Heathen Ninevites relented at thy threatenings, thou sparedst them. Had the Jews repented when Jesus wept, what joy had there been in Heaven! From the woes to which their hardness of heart exposed them, may we learn wisdom unto salvation! O that the things which make for our peace, that have been addressed to our understandings, may not now be shut out from our hearts, by unbelief, worldly-mindedness, or self-conceit. Thou art still calling Jews to repentance;—thou art bringing idolatrous barbarians to know and love thee. From the east and the west, from the north and the south, multitudes press into thy kingdom. Let us not still refuse or delay to enter while there is room, lest it be worse for us than for Heathens or for Jews. Now to him who is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them, be everlasting praise! Amen.

SERMON LXXXVII.

THE ATTRACTION OF THE CROSS.

John xii. 32. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.

THE sufferings of our blessed Lord had this peculiarity in them,—they were all exactly foreseen. In great mercy God hides from us the particular trials we shall hereafter endure. He knows our infirmities, and that the foresight of future calamities would not only deprive us of present enjoyment, but prevent our activity and usefulness in the world. But the Lord Jesus Christ (the speaker in our text) had an exact foreknowledge of all the sufferings he was to endure; and he often dropped a hint concerning them to his disciples, though they knew not well what he meant. To Nicodemus he had long before said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so shall the Son of Man be lifted up;" and when he was journeying

to Jerusalem, for the last time, he said to his disciples, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be delivered unto the chief priests and to the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles, and they shall mock him, and scourge him, and spit upon him, and shall kill him, and the third day he shall rise again." Yet, with all these sufferings full in view, he was vigorous and active in all the work which the Father had given him to do, and never shrunk from his arduous undertaking, though he knew that suffering and death were at hand. Homer exalts the character of his hero Achilles, because, when going forth to the Trojan war, he knew he should fall in the conflict. Far greater was the fortitude of our Divine Savior, who had in certain prospect, sufferings infinitely greater; so that it was truly said by our British poet, that

"This was compassion like a God,
That when the Savior knew
The price of pardon was his blood,
His pity ne'er withdrew."

These words of our text are spoken on a memorable occasion. Some pious strangers coming to Jerusalem, expressed to his disciples a wish to be introduced to him; "they desired to see Jesus." Our Lord rejoiced, because it was a prelude to the introduction of us poor Gentiles into his church; but before this could take place, he must die; for as a grain of wheat must first perish in the earth, before it is productive of fruit, so must Jesus become a sacrifice for sin by his death, that those who believe in him may not perish, but have everlasting life. And then observe in our text the happy effect. He, the blessed Redeemer, having been lifted up upon the cross, exalted to glory, and exhibited in the Gospel, he shall prove the grand attractive, the heavenly loadstone; he shall, by the preaching of his Gospel, and by the influence of his Spirit, draw to himself, in faith, and love, and obedience, "all men," that is, all true Christians, in every country, and in every age. Yes, millions of millions of immortal souls, saved from sin and hell, and the grave, shall forsake all and cleave to him, so that nothing shall be able to separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

From these pleasing and instructive words, we shall take occasion to consider,

First. *"The elevation of the blessed Jesus upon the cross;"*—"the Son of man shall be lifted up."

Secondly. *"The attractive effect of that elevation;"* "I will draw all men unto me."

We are first to consider the elevation of the blessed Jesus upon the cross; for this is, doubtless, intended, as appears from the words immediately following the text—"this he spake, signifying what death he should die."

And here let us reflect both upon the *matter of fact* itself; and upon the *great design* of it. The matter of fact itself is deeply interesting and affecting. Behold the *Sufferer*! He is no ordinary person. He is a great; He is an innocent; He is a benevolent; yea, He is a divine person. The sufferings of the great and noble, of princes and kings, usually excite peculiar interest. When did ever such a glorious person suffer? "They killed the prince of life;" "they crucified the Lord of glory:" and, if a person, *innocent*, as well as exalted, expire like a criminal, what sympathy is excited! Never was there so innocent a sufferer as the Lord Jesus; it never could be said of any other, "he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth;" for he was the holy "Lamb of God, without blemish and without spot." If a person of unusual *benevolence* suffer, every heart throbs with sorrow, if not with indignation; but never was there a sufferer so benevolent as Jesus; his heart was all goodness and tenderness, and he had spent all his time and his strength in going about to do good. O, if all the objects of his tender compassion had been collected around his cross, what an affecting group would they have formed! If all the persons whose eyes he had opened, whose ears he had unstopped, whose limbs he had restored, whose diseases he had healed, whose sorrows he had assuaged,—had they all been gathered around the tree, what a numerous body would they have been! and would they not have been ready to exclaim, He must not die; or, if he must die, let us die with him: but the bulk of the spectators was very differently affected. Filled with rage, they added insult to cruelty, and they took a savage delight in his shame and torment. His glory was indeed veiled, and to the eyes of sense he appeared a forlorn and deserted malefactor; yet amidst all his sufferings, there were some enlightened persons who "beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Yea, the more thoughtful among the multitude were deeply affected with the awful prodigies which attended his crucifixion; and were constrained to say, "Surely this was the Son of God!"

Contemplate his sufferings, and say if

ever there were "any sorrow like unto his sorrow." He was indeed "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief;" but the keenest sufferings were reserved to the last. When "his hour" was approaching, hear what he says, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Shall I say, Father, save me from this hour?" No; he would not say that, because it was for that very purpose that he was come into the world.

Consider the agonies of his soul in the garden of Gethsemane. Think of them, you who have pleasant gardens; while you tread on the smooth walks, behold the beautiful flowers, and inhale their various sweets—think of the Lord of life and glory, in that garden where, to expiate the sins which first commenced in Eden, "he was sorrowful and very heavy;" he was "sorrowful even unto death." The agony of his soul forced great drops of blood from every pore of his body. Behold him prostrate on the cold ground, embracing, as it were, the dust for us, who are sinful dust and ashes, that he might raise us to mansions, above the stars. Hear his doleful cries. He had been accustomed to suffer, but not to complain: but now, he could no more be silent. "My soul, said he, is exceeding sorrowful even unto death. Abba, Father; all things are possible with thee. O my Father, if this cup may not pass from me, except I drink it, thy will be done: and again, being in an agony, he prayed the more earnestly," "pouring out strong cries and tears to him who was able to save him from death."

At length the traitor arrives, at the head of an armed banditti: the hypocritical Judas betrays him. Jesus speaks, and his adversaries fall, like dead men, to the ground; they rise and renew the assault; he submits and is bound; he is carried away like a criminal. O what sorrows succeeded throughout that tedious night! while he was hurried from place to place—to the house of Caiaphas, of Pilate, of Herod, and Pilate again. He was falsely accused, and cruelly condemned. O what base falsehoods, what gross injustice! Smitten upon the cheek—spit upon—crowned with sharp thorns—and severely scourged in the Roman manner. See him, bearing, weary and spent, the heavy cross upon his bleeding shoulders! He is stretched, at length, upon the accursed tree; his hands and feet nailed to it with large spikes; from thence suspended, bleeding and agonizing, for several hours; exposed to the insults and mockery of an

enraged multitude! In the mean time, there were sufferings far more severe than any that could be inflicted upon his body by the hands of wicked men—agonies that excruciated his whole soul! Who can explain the meaning of those mysterious words—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Yet, amidst all this scene of woe, Heaven appears to commiserate. The sun, as if ashamed of the atrocious deed, withdrew its light, and the rocks, less insensible than the hearts of men, were cleft asunder; the solid earth itself was convulsed; and the graves, as if conscious they could not long retain their prey, were seen to open, ready to resign it. Such are the outlines of the history itself when the glorious sufferer was lifted up on the cross.

But what could be the design of all this? Is there not something greatly mysterious in it, that such a person should suffer, and suffer in such a manner? The Gospel affords a key to the whole. It tells us that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son;" it tells us that one man must die for the people, "the just for the unjust;" that, if man be pardoned, a satisfaction must be made; and who could make it but the Son of God himself? For this purpose he voluntarily engaged. "Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me." "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." The sacrifice is made. "It is finished," said the expiring Savior: and it is accepted, for, lo, he rises from the dead and ascends into heaven. God is well pleased; so pleased, that he commands this Gospel of his dear Son to be made known to the whole world; he commissions his servants to go and proclaim it to every creature under heaven; he furnishes them with miraculous powers, to enable them to do it. They proclaim "peace by Jesus Christ," wherever they go, and invite the greatest sinners to come to God through him; assuring them that "whosoever cometh to the Father by him, shall not be cast out," but be accepted, pardoned, and saved. Thus it was that "he was lifted up," and by this elevation he draws men unto him—which is

The second thing we were to contemplate. "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me." To the carnal eye there was nothing at all attractive in the original spectacle. Men saw nothing at Calvary but ignominy, and suffering and disgrace; and, notwithstanding the miracles with which the first Gospel ministers proclaimed the word, how was it

received? To the Jews it was a stumbling-block; to the Greeks it was foolishness. Men, in general, saw no beauty nor glory in a crucified Savior; they were rather disgusted, and rejected the counsel of God against themselves. Nevertheless, the cross of Christ is that grand engine which God himself hath planted, and by which he will effectually draw millions of souls to himself, even all whom he hath ordained to everlasting life; and "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Not, indeed, all individuals; for all are not drawn: but all sorts of men; and in all ages; and in all countries, whithersoever his Gospel is carried. "I will draw *all* men unto me."

This expression reminds us of our distance and alienation from the great and blessed God. We are far from God; but we are not at all inclined to return to him; there is an aversion of heart; "the carnal mind," sad to say, "is enmity against God;" and the language of it is, even to the blessed God himself, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." And from this dangerous distance, we never can be restored, but by the special grace of God. So our Lord speaks in the sixth chapter of this Gospel, in the 44th verse, "No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day." And, in another place, he says, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life." The fact is, they *cannot*, because they *will not*; the fault is in the will; and this is extremely criminal; it is a desperate criminality of heart that keeps men at a distance from God, and keeps them from him, when there is such an attractive spectacle as this exhibited to their view.

Farther, the expression "drawing," denotes the sweet, persuasive, and powerful manner, in which souls are brought to Christ. It is expressed in similar phraseology by the prophet Hosea; "I drew them with the cords of a man, and with the bands of love." To an enlightened mind, and to a renewed heart, nothing can appear so rational, so desirable, so beneficial, so delightful, as a compliance with the commands of the Gospel. In the common occurrences of human life, men are attracted by interest or by pleasure; they are very ready to embrace measures that promise them safety and profit; and should it not be so in religion too? The first attractive in religion is SAFETY. In imminent danger, men catch eagerly at the first means of deliverance. If a house be on fire, how gladly will the inhabitant adopt the readi

est means of escape! If a person be in danger of drowning, he will eagerly catch fast hold of any thing that is at hand, and never quit his grasp, but with safety, or with death. If the body be dangerously diseased, how welcome is skilful advice, and potent medicines! for "all that a man hath he will give for his life:" and, should men give less for their souls? No, not when they are brought in earnest to cry "What shall I do to be saved?" and when that cry is heard in heaven, ready is the answer that is given, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Christ, the great Deliverer, is at hand, able and ready to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him.

This was strikingly illustrated by our blessed Lord when he conferred with Nicodemus, and said (in the third of John and 14th verse,) "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." The Israelites, stung with fiery serpents, were in imminent danger of death. They were told, that safety, and health, and life might be obtained, by one look at the appointed object. They looked and lived. In like manner, the convinced sinner gladly turns to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is invited so to do, and he is always welcome when he applies; nor shall any one look to the Savior in vain.

Again, not only safety, but PLEASURE is a powerful attractive. The love of pleasure is universal. Every person born into the world possesses it; but, alas! it is the love of *sinful pleasures* that proves the ruin of all mankind; but, in the Gospel, there are offered to us pleasures that are pure, that are cheap, that are lasting; "Wisdom's ways are pleasantness; all her paths are peace;" even "the peace that passeth all understanding"—"the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory,—the hope that maketh not ashamed." These are freely offered to us in the Gospel; the delights of communion with God, the pleasures of reading his word, attending his house and ordinances, and enjoying communion with his people. These, and many, many more pleasures, are offered to us; and these are strongly attractive to all those who are taught of God.

There is also something that is sweetly attractive in the condescension and benevolence of our superiors. When persons far above us in rank, show a disinterested concern for our welfare, and are willing to

fer a favor upon us, it powerfully attracts the soul, and excites grateful feelings in every generous mind. And thus also it is in religion. Behold an instance of it in the woman, of whom you read in the seventh chapter of St. Luke, who followed our Lord to the house of the Pharisee; and there we find, she plentifully watered the feet of our blessed Lord with the tears of penitence and gratitude; she also anointed them with rich and odoriferous ointment, attracting the notice of all who were in the house, and exciting the resentment of the proud, self-righteous Pharisee: but our blessed Lord vindicates and commends her conduct, and says, "I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much." This it is, that accounts for the active services and energies of the ministers of God, in all ages, who most gladly spend and are spent in the service, and for the glory of their divine Lord. When St. Paul speaks of his own labors and sufferings, with those also of his companions, he says, "We are troubled on every side; we are perplexed; we are persecuted; we are delivered to death for Jesus' sake." Yet all this was calmly endured and joyfully suffered! And why was all this? How could it be accounted for? He tells us, "the love of Christ constraineth us; for we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and it was for this end, that we should not hereafter live to ourselves, but to him who died for us and rose again."

And here, likewise, is the centre of Christian communion. This accounts for that harmony and concord, which, in the greatest and best respects, is found among all the followers of Christ, however varied their denominations may be, because it is one and the same great object that has attracted them all, and brought them all together. "When Shiloh comes," said the people, "to him shall the gathering of the people be. He is the root of Jesse, and to him shall the Gentiles be assembled;" yea, according to the promise, "He shall gather together in one, all things in heaven and in earth."

Here, then, is a brief summary of the religion of Jesus Christ, Christ lifted up, upon the cross, as our atoning sacrifice; and the blessed effects of this, upon the hearts of all believers—"If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me."

Now let us inquire, What do we know of this attraction? Let me entreat every one of you to ask the question. I have heard of this attraction; what do I know

of it! Am I one of those so drawn? All men are drawn by something apparently good—by pleasure or by interest, or by wisdom, but chiefly by the world; this is the great magnet; there are few comparatively that are drawn to Christ, but multitudes are drawn away from him; and for what? for what, I ask; do you neglect Jesus? Think, O think in time, how much you will hereafter need him; anticipate the solemn hour, when you must die; nor think it a melancholy business to anticipate it, for it will come, it will surely come; and unless you have been drawn to Jesus, how awful will that hour be! When flesh and heart are failing, what will you do without Christ? You may do without him *now*; in the midst of your worldly engagements and pleasures, you may contrive to fill up your time, thoughtless of Christ and salvation; but what will you do when you come to die? What will you do when you are called to stand at the bar of God? If he be not your friend, better had it been for you that you had never been born. Turn away your eyes then from beholding vanity. Turn them to the blessed Jesus: “Behold the Lamb of God,” who is now evidently set before you, as a crucified Savior. At this moment his language is, “Look unto me, and ye shall be saved, all the ends of the earth.”

I would now say, What a glorious object is a crucified Savior! Let mistaken men, let sensualists, let rationalists, pour contempt upon the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; but here will our hearts fix, nor shall conspiring worlds be able to drive us thence. Here will we live; here will we die. It is here we find every religious advantage—every thing we can desire. Do we want pardon? He who hung on the cross is “exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins.” Do we want peace? Like them of old, we “look unto him, and are lightened.” Do we wish to feel godly sorrow in our hearts? “We look to him who was pierced, and we mourn; we abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes.” Do we desire victory over sin? Only he who died *for* sin, can strengthen us to die *to* it; and “he will subdue our iniquities.” One look at Jesus will prove, as one said, “both law and gospel to us.” Do we want heaven itself, or hope for happiness? There, even there, will Jesus be the grand attractive object; and the essence of the heavenly glory will consist in “seeing him as he is;” in seeing “the Lamb that once was slain,” but who is now “the Lamb in the midst of the throne;” and

there shall we be with him, where he is, and behold his glory.” Well then may we most cordially unite with the Apostle of the Gentiles, and say, “God forbid that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” To whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be glory everlasting. Amen.

PRAYER.—O LORD, how justly, ere now, mightest thou have driven each of us to that everlasting punishment which thou preparedst for Satan and his angels! Yet still thou art drawing us by the hands of affection to serve thee. Thy tender mercy, which is over all thy works, still invites all mankind to seek thee, if haply they may find thee, even without the guidance of thy word. With us, all thy dealings have been suited to draw us to thyself; but, above all, thy Gospel, in which Jesus is set forth to us as suffering for our sins, rising again for our justification, and ascending to thy right hand, that he might bestow on men the best gifts, even repentance and remission of sins. Herein indeed is love, that he died for us as sinners, as enemies, not as friends of God. How dreadful must be our state, that nothing less could redeem us than the precious blood of Christ! May his love constrain us, who, when all were dead, submitted to death for all, that they who live might not live to themselves; but to him who died for them and rose again. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive blessing and glory! Amen.

SERMON LXXXVIII.

BAPTISM NOT REGENERATION.

John i. 13. Which were BORN not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of GOD.

ONE of the most plain and important doctrines revealed in the word of God is that of the guilty and dangerous state of man as a fallen creature. The testimony of the Scripture is, that “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin;” that “the whole world is guilty before God;” that “the whole world lieth in wickedness,” those only excepted who are “born of God.”—This is the true state of man; of every man, by nature: but God, of his infinite mercy, “remembered us in our low estate;” and devised means for our deliverance. He determined to send both his Son and his Spirit into the world. “He so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, to be a propitiation for our sins;” he also gave his Holy Spirit for the purpose of changing our natural dispositions, enabling us to “die unto sin, and live unto righteousness,” that so we may serve him in this world, and “be made meet for the inherit-

ance of the saints in light." Both these gifts are equally requisite:—the former respects justification; the latter respects sanctification, or the habit and disposition of our souls towards him.

This change, in Scripture, is represented as a *very great change*; not a partial, but a universal change; not merely external, but an internal change. It is such a change as is properly called "a new birth"—a resurrection from the dead—a new creation. The term whereby it is usually described in Scripture is Regeneration, or the New Birth.

One of the most memorable passages in which this doctrine is maintained, is in the third chapter of St. John's Gospel; where we read of a conversation between our blessed Savior, and Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. In that discourse, the nature of the change is explained; the necessity of it insisted upon; and the objections to it are answered; and while the world endures, this passage will continue to be an impregnable fortress, in which this grand truth will be preserved. From this Scripture it appears that religion is a supernatural change of the heart of man; or, as it is most strikingly expressed in the words of our text, a being *born of God*.

But at various times certain divines have maintained that regeneration is merely baptism with water; that every person duly baptized is born again; and that no other regeneration is to be expected in this world.

One of these divines expresses himself in the following manner: "Those who are baptized are immediately translated from the curse of Adam, to the grace of Christ. The original guilt which they brought into the world is mystically washed away, and they receive the forgiveness of all the sins they may themselves have committed: they become reconciled to God, partakers of the Holy Ghost, and heirs of eternal happiness. They acquire a new name, a new hope, a new faith, a new rule."

The same author further says, that "all those expressions—regeneration—born of water and of the Spirit—begotten again to a lively hope—born again not of corruptible seed, &c.—all relate to the simple act, once performed on every individual."

And again, "the word Regeneration is in the Scripture solely and exclusively applied to the one immediate effect of Baptism once administered, and is never used synonymously to the repentance or

reformation of Christians, or to express any operation of the Holy Ghost upon the human mind subsequent to baptism."

Another divine has more recently published in the form of a cheap tract, which has been widely circulated with the sanction of eminent names, sentiments of the same description.

This author says, that in baptism a supernatural grace is conferred—a new principle put into us—a new principle of life and action, even the Spirit of grace—the sanctification of the Spirit, which makes us heirs of salvation, and entitles us to eternal life; and this, he adds, "extends to every one, to whom baptism is rightly administered—that to deny this, is to deny its sacramental character—is heresy—is, in some sense, doing despite to the Spirit of grace"—and that, "no other regeneration is possible in this world."

These sentiments, I conceive, are extremely erroneous, and highly dangerous to the souls of men; leading them to rest in "a form of godliness," and keeping them from seeking those influences of the Holy Ghost to which, in Scripture, every thing that is truly good in experience and practice is ascribed. It appears, therefore, to me, that a serious consideration of the text, will tend to expose the fallacy of the opinions just stated; and show that the change we plead for is something more, something far greater, than baptism by water.

From this text, I make this simple observation, that

All real Christians are born of God.

This agrees with what our Lord says in his discourse with Nicodemus, in the third chapter of John's Gospel, the third and following verses, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be *born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God." In the margin it is, "*born from above*." And in the fifth verse our Lord says, in answer to the objection of Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." What is meant by being "born of water and of the Spirit," I shall explain by and by: but our Lord chiefly insists upon being "born of the Spirit." In the 8th verse, he says "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." We cannot doubt, I think, that being "born of the Spirit" means the same as being "born of God" in the text. It is a birth, *spiritual*,

heavenly, and *divine* in its nature ; and is carefully distinguished, in the words of the text, from every other kind of birth.

The apostle in the text affirms that all believers are born, "*not of blood ;*" "*nor of the will of the flesh ;*" "*nor of the will of man,*" but, of God. "*Not of blood ;*" by which I apprehend, is meant not by a natural descent from Abraham, in which the Jews trusted and boasted ; and in which St. Paul once trusted—when he was in a natural state, while neither they nor he resembled their ancestor, nor "*walked in the steps of his faith.*" Nor is this birth to be ascribed to "*the blood of circumcision,*" on which also the Jews placed much dependence ; just as nominal Christians now do upon baptism, not regarding the circumcision of the heart ; and of this the apostle speaks decidedly in the second chapter of his epistle to the Romans, "*for he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly ; neither is that circumcision, which is outward, in the flesh : but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart ; in the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God.*" May this passage be seriously considered by those who believe that external baptism is enough, and that the internal baptism of the Spirit is unnecessary.

Again, it is said, "*not of the flesh*"—this inward and spiritual change is not derived from our natural parents ; is not to be ascribed to their piety, their prayers, their good advice, or good wishes for their offspring, for all these, alas ! too frequently fail. Nor is it to be ascribed to the virtue of any ceremonial observances, which are sometimes called *flesh*, even the appointments of God, of an external kind, when depended upon to the neglect of their spiritual design. St. Paul alludes to these, when he speaks of "*confidence in the flesh,*" which he once had, when he was in a natural state. (Phil. 3.)

It is further said in our text, "*not of the will of man ;*"—not from any innate principle of man ; not from any goodness of our own hearts, nor from the eloquence of man ; the most powerful arguments of the most holy and zealous ministers of the Gospel may be unavailing ; they may be "*instructors,*" but without the Spirit of God, they cannot be "*fathers*" in Christ. Paul may plant, and Apollos water, but the increase is of God.

Having stated, then, that it is not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man ; he affirms that it is "*of God ;*" he ascribes this new nature to the

will and power of God. It is of his own free, sovereign will, as St. James expresses it. (ch. i. 18.) "*Of his own will, begat he us, with the word of truth ; that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.*"

And the expression, "*born of God,*" certainly denotes the holy effect of this spiritual change ; for to be "*born of God*" must signify, being made the "*partaker of a divine nature.*" As children partake of the same nature with their parents, so he that is born of God must be a partaker of "*a divine nature,*" as it is affirmed by St. Peter, (2 Pet. i. 4.)—"Whereby are given unto us great and precious promises, that by these we might be partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." Surely, all this must denote something far more and greater than baptism.

We shall now produce from Scripture, certain effects of this divine birth, and then let it be fairly examined whether they are always found in persons who have been baptized.

In the first place, All those who are born of God have received Christ.

The text refers to such persons in the twelfth verse of this chapter—"to as many as *received him*, to them gave he power to become the sons of God—even to them that *believe on his name.*" Here it is affirmed that all who are born of God, *receive Jesus Christ* : and it is as much the character of believers *now*, to receive Jesus Christ, as it was then. He is set before us in the Gospel ; he is exhibited, proposed, and tendered to us, as an all-sufficient Savior, who, by his obedience unto death, has brought in everlasting righteousness. And in Romans, v. 11, we are said "*to rejoice in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement.*" Believing in Jesus is an evidence of being born of God, as also saith the apostle John, "*Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.*" Now can all this be said of every baptized person ? Do not many such persons reject, not receive, Christ ? Do not many substitute their own merits, in the room of the righteousness of Christ ; not submitting to his righteousness ? Do they not refuse to submit to his instructions as the great Teacher, preferring the dictates of their own judgment and the opinions of a mistaken world ? and do not the unholy lives of many declare that they reject him as a king, and will not suffer him to reign over them ?

Secondly. It is affirmed in 1 John, iii.

9, that "whosoever is born of God, doth not *commit sin*, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God"—that is, because he partakes of a divine nature by means of his new birth. By "*committing sin*," we are to understand living *habitually* in sin; for "there is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not:" but believers do not make, as it were, a trade of sin; or live in the wilful habitual practice of it, being "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever." 1 Pet. i. 23.

But can it be said of the bulk of professing Christians—of baptized persons—that they "do not commit sin?" We are constrained to believe the contrary.

Thirdly. It is testified by the apostle John, (1 Eph. v. 4.) that all "who are born of God, *overcome the world*." And in another place it is written—"This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith." Believers, that is, persons born of God, are enabled to conquer the pleasures and allurements of this world; faith realizes the great invisibles of eternity, so that the most splendid things of time appear like the baubles and toys of children. So Moses, when he might have commanded the honors and pleasures of the Egyptian court, renounced them all, and chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;" like the apostle Paul, who said, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Nor can the frowns of the world appal the true believer. It is a certain truth that "all who live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." In most ages of the church, the people of God have been called to endure fines, imprisonment, racks, torture, and flames, for the sake of Jesus Christ; but still they were made more than conquerors through him that loved them.

But is this the character of all baptized Christians? Do we not see them thronging the broad road that leads to destruction? Has their baptism changed the disposition of their hearts, so that they do not love the world, nor the things of the world? Are they not profane, drunken, and lewd, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God?

Once more, fourthly, That the great change of which we speak, the new birth, is somewhat infinitely superior to baptism, appears from its being always represented in Scripture as effected by the special power

of God, particularly in Eph. i. 18—20. St. Paul, writing to the Christians at Ephesus, compares the power of divine grace which had changed their hearts, to the "mighty power exerted on the body of Christ when he was raised from the dead. It is therefore called, a *resurrection*, as well as a regeneration. "You hath he *quicken*ed," says the Apostle to the Ephesians, "who were dead in trespasses and sins." And, in another place, it is said, "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." Sometimes it is termed, "A creation," which must doubtless be the work of God; as St. Paul speaks, "In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a *new creature*," or "a new creation:" and the same sentiment is expressed by "taking away the heart of stone, and giving a heart of flesh." But is it possible that the application of water to the body should produce such a change? Do we not see multitudes of baptized persons, who have not had the heart of stone removed? Is it not evident, then, that to be "born of God," or, to be "a new creature," must signify something more and greater than to be baptized with water?

I shall now make an observation or two, and then hasten to a conclusion. It is pleaded by the advocates for baptismal regeneration, that our Lord says, John iii. 5, "Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born *of water and of the Spirit*, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." It should be noticed, that when our Lord uttered these words, baptism, as a Christian ordinance, had not been instituted, though the baptism of John was generally practised; but it is not likely that our Lord would insist in this solemn manner on the absolute necessity of baptism, when as yet it was not ordained by Christ himself. The most natural interpretation of being "born of *water* and of the *Spirit*" is, that the grace of God purifies the soul, as water cleanses the body. In like manner it was predicted of Christ, "he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with *fire*;" that is, the grace of God, the Spirit, shall operate on your souls like fire, consuming the dross of corruption in your natures. Besides, there is no more reason to suppose that baptism is always accompanied by the regenerating influence of the Holy Ghost, than that in the Lord's Supper every communicant is made a partaker of the body and blood of Christ, to his spiritual nourishment and growth in grace; doubtless it is too often received

in an unworthy, and therefore fruitless manner.

Besides, if persons will maintain, as the authors I have alluded to do, that being born of water and of the Spirit necessarily signifies baptism—what will be the consequence? I conceive, nothing less than the eternal damnation of every one that is not baptized; for Christ solemnly declares, that Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God; and if baptism be regeneration, then it follows, that if a person be not baptized, he cannot be saved. But who will venture to assert this? If children, for instance, are not baptized, it is generally occasioned by the neglect of their parents; and will any person dare to assert that children shall be condemned for this fault of their parents?

Besides, there is a great number of pious persons, who conscientiously reject infant baptism, and think that none but adults ought to be baptized: nevertheless, their own baptism is deferred, perhaps from an unfounded fear that they are not proper subjects of baptism; in the same manner as many abstain from the Lord's table; but shall they therefore be condemned? and would it not be uncharitable in the extreme to say they are not born of God, but are the children of the devil, because water has not been applied to them? There is another class of Christians, who reject baptism altogether, and the Lord's Supper too; I do not plead for such an opinion, or practice; but must they therefore be doomed to destruction? They must, if baptism be regeneration; for, on that principle, the unbaptized are unregenerated, and the unregenerate cannot be saved.

Another text is pressed into this service. We are referred to Titus, iii. 5, where we read of "the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost:" and some maintain, that baptism is here intended, and that it is the renewing of the Holy Ghost; especially, say they, as the word *washing* may be rendered *laver*; but it is by no means certain that here is any allusion at all to baptism; and if there be any allusion to the laver used by the Jewish priests, it is merely to show, that as water purifies the body, so the Spirit of Christ purifies the soul. The latter sentence, "the renewing of the Holy Ghost," is explanatory of the former, and the plain meaning is, "according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration—even the renewing of the Holy Ghost."

Antiquity is also pleaded for the purpose of proving that baptism is regeneration. It is freely admitted, that some of

the early writers, called the Fathers, in the second and following centuries, did speak in this manner. But this may be readily accounted for. Such was the state of the world at that time, and such the danger of making a public profession of Christianity, that it was charitably concluded that all adult persons, coming forward by baptism to profess themselves Christians, were sincere, and therefore it was presumed that the baptized were regenerated, and this led them to call the *sign* by the name of the thing signified; baptism being an outward and visible sign of that inward and spiritual grace.

In like manner many of the ancient writers call baptism, *illumination*; and baptized persons, the illuminated; not that they supposed the minds of men to be illuminated by the rite of baptism; but they charitably concluded that the baptized were illuminated. But all this does not make it necessary to suppose that baptism and regeneration are the same thing. The fact is, they called the *sign* by the name of the thing signified, and the consequence has been injurious.

We also freely admit, that in an *external* and *ecclesiastical* sense, baptized persons may be said to be regenerate. Converts from the Heathen, the Jewish, and the Mahometan world, are, by baptism, *Christianized*, or, as it is vulgarly called, *christened*, regularly devoted to Christ—they assume a Christian profession; they are "baptized unto Christ," as Israel was "baptized unto Moses in the cloud and by the sea." But it is dangerous in the extreme, to maintain, that no other regeneration is necessary than that which is external in baptism; it remains to baptized, as well as to unbaptized persons, an unchangeable and solemn truth, "Ye must be born again."

I shall close this discourse with a passage from Dr. Doddridge, in his sermons upon regeneration, which is worthy of the most serious consideration: "And though persons are taught to speak of their state, in consequence of baptism, in very high, and, I fear, dangerous terms, yet when good men come to explain those terms, it evidently appears that many, of whom they are used, are so in a state of salvation, as to be daily obnoxious to damnation—so the children of God, as also to be children of the devil—and so inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, as to be children of wrath and on the brink of hell."

Let us beware, then, of depending upon our baptism, without being made spiritually "new creatures in Christ Jesus." To

me, and to many persons, this appears to be a dangerous doctrine; and though it should be publicly pleaded for by men of great learning, eminent station, and circulated through the country by high authority, yet I must deem it my duty, as one, though one of the most unworthy, of the watchmen in Israel, to cry aloud and sound the alarm when the souls of men are endangered by a destructive error. It matters not by what names, ancient or modern, error is maintained and sanctioned, we must and do refer to "the law and to the testimony;" and if men speak not according to these, it is because "there is no truth in them."

Let us, my brethren, seriously inquire, each for himself, Am I born of God? and the answer does not seem to be difficult. We quoted several passages of Scripture, in which the Apostle tells us what are the characters of persons who are born of God; they are persons who have "received Christ," who "do not commit sin," and who have "overcome the world." By these marks we may know whether we are born of God or not.

And let us, if born of God, render it manifest in the whole of our character and conduct. Let us consider what dispositions of mind, and what kind of behavior may be expected from persons of such high birth. Let us "be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom we are to shine as lights in the world." Let us be "followers, or imitators, of God as dear children."

Finally, Let us recollect what future and eternal blessings appertain to us as children of God. If we are born of God, we are the children of God; and "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ;" to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be everlasting praises. Amen.

PRAYER.—ACCEPT our thanks, O Lord, that we have been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost! We praise thee for this solemn pledge of our instructions in all these things that thou hast commanded, and for every advantage we have enjoyed in connexion with so great a privilege. We thank thee for every outward sign and memorial of thy grace to polluted and guilty creatures! Pardon our unprofitableness and unfaithfulness in the use of them! Preserve us from abusing them to the neglect, and even to the denial, of those spiritual benefits, to the pursuit of which they increase our obligation. Having been cleansed with water, in thy sacred name, may we the more earnestly seek for that purity of mind, without which none can see God! Create in us a

clean heart, O God!—renew a right spirit within us; and to thee, the only true God, Father, Son, and Spirit, be the glory for ever. Amen.

SERMON LXXXIX.

INVOCATION OF CHRIST.

Romans x. 13. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved.

THE Jews were for many ages the peculiar people of God. The introduction of the Gentiles into the church, was a mystery which had been hidden from the world; and therefore when that great event took place, it was difficult to reconcile the Jewish Christians to it. The apostles themselves, who were Jews, were not forward to obey their Master's command—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel in every nation, and to every creature." God led them to it, as it were, by miracles; and the apostles found it necessary to quote passages from those prophets who had predicted this event; and to show the Jews how they were then fulfilling. Of this nature and design are the words of our text, which are quoted from the prophecy of Joel, (ch. ii. 32.) which Scripture was a prediction of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, and is so applied by St. Peter, in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. The words of our text are, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved:" in the prophet Joel, it is, "Whosoever shall call upon the name of JEHOVAH shall be saved." Doubtless, Jesus Christ is the person intended in the text, as all the verses connected with it clearly show: and, if so, this passage of Scripture, like many others, proves that Jehovah, the name of the divine essence, is applicable to our Lord Jesus Christ, and affords, among many others, an unanswerable proof of his divinity.

For the illustration and profitable use of these words, I shall,

First, Make a few observations upon them; and,

Secondly, Show more particularly that Jesus Christ is properly an object of religious worship.

In the first place we shall make a few observations on the words of the text—"Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved."

1. Salvation is the grand concern of an awakened sinner. It is the grand concern of him who "calls upon the name of the

Lord," as the words "shall be saved," plainly show. This was the object the apostle had in view, as you find in the first verse of this chapter—"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved;" and in the ninth verse, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be *saved*." Salvation is deliverance—deliverance from imminent danger, the danger of God's eternal wrath—the "wrath to come," and which will ever remain, "the wrath to come." The person who calls upon the name of the Lord, is one who has been convinced that he has broken the holy law of God, and incurred its dreadful penalty, which is eternal death; he is afraid of God's judgments; and well he may; for "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Hence he anxiously looks out for help; his inquiry is, "What shall I do to be saved?" Ask yourselves, my friends, whether you have been brought into this state? and whether you have thus called upon the name of the Lord, from a sense of danger? You know in what manner the Scriptures represent the condition of the sinner—sometimes it is that of a guilty and condemned criminal, in danger of punishment; sometimes it is that of a sick man ready to die, under the power of disease; sometimes it is that of a sheep, which has strayed from the fold, and is in danger of being devoured by wild beasts. Indeed, every expression of danger is employed, in the illustration of the case of a sinner; and we should all be concerned to know that this is our condition, that so we may be induced to call upon the name of the Lord.

2. Calling upon the name of the Lord is an expression of faith in the heart.

No one calls on the name of the Lord, till he is persuaded that the Lord can help him, in his particular case; and this is evident from the fourteenth verse of this chapter; "How then shall they call upon him, in whom they have not believed"—believed in what? That which is called, in the eighth verse, "the word of faith, which we preach;" the word of the Gospel, which a man "believeth with his heart unto righteousness;" for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"—believing the testimony and promise of God in the Gospel is supposed in this case; and the apostle particularly refers to believing, in the heart, the resurrection of Christ. In the ninth verse, it is said, "If thou shalt confess with thy

mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved:" because the resurrection of Christ is the great proof of his ability to save, and that he is accepted of the Father, in the character of a Savior: for, as the apostle elsewhere argues, "if Christ be not risen, then is your faith vain; ye are yet in your sins." And in another place, "if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also in vain." But Jesus was both "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification;" so that we may join in the language of the apostle Peter, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again into a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

3. Again. You will find this calling upon the Lord, is accompanied with confession: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation;" there is a confession suitable to all Christians, in their joining some Christian society, in order to partake of divine ordinances; for though no particular form of doing this is specified in the Scriptures, yet almost all churches require some open profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and doubtless our Lord himself requires it, for he has said, Matthew, x. "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him also will I confess before my Father which is in heaven; but whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven."

4. But the text has certainly a particular reference to prayer—calling on the name of the Lord in prayer, and this necessarily supposes a belief that he is able to hear and to answer prayer; which he could not be, if he were a mere man, existing only in one place, and able to attend to one petition only at a time, and that where he is corporally present: whereas Jesus says, for the comfort of his followers, "where two or three are met together in my name, there am I, in the midst of them." Calling upon the name of the Lord, includes a personal application to Jesus for salvation; renouncing all dependence upon our own righteousness. It is the reverse of that for which the Apostle so much blames his countrymen in the third verse of this chapter; "for they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Calling

on the Lord implies a submission to the righteousness of the Lord, and he who thus calls, must believe that "there is no name under heaven, given among men, whereby we can be saved, but the name of the Lord Jesus."

I proceed now, in the second place, more particularly to show that Jesus Christ is properly an object of religious worship.

Indeed, this is already sufficiently proved, for *reliance* upon Christ, and *calling* upon him as a Savior, are the highest acts of worship we can perform; and it would be the height of folly to suppose that, if he were not God, he could save all the millions of sinners, who in all ages and countries should call upon him. But that Christ is an object of religious worship not only to men but to superior beings, appears from Heb. i. 6, where Jehovah says, "Let all the angels of God worship him;" and so we find in the visions of St. John, Rev. v. 11—13. "I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, proclaiming with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

It is evident from several parts of the New Testament, that it was the character, the distinguishing character, of the first Christians, that they "called upon Christ." In the 11th and 12th verses of this chapter, it is said, "whosoever believeth on him, shall not be ashamed"; for there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all, is rich unto all them that call upon him;" which supposes that all persons of this description, all who are real believers, do call upon him; for, in order to show there is no difference between Jew and Greek, he says "the same Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him. He is the Lord both of Jews and Gentiles, and he is rich unto all who call upon him. This supposes that all the saints do call upon him; and he is rich, inexhaustible in the riches of his merit and mercy, and exceedingly bounteous in his saving blessings to all sorts of persons, of whatever rank or nation—to all and every one who invokes and worships him as a divine Savior.

If we look into the history of the primitive Church, in the Acts of the Apostles, we find this was their character, they called upon the name of the Lord. For instance, in the 9th chapter of the Acts, and the 13th and 14th verses, Ananias says,

concerning Saul of Tarsus, who was just come to Damascus, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man; how much evil he hath done to thy Saints at Jerusalem; and here he hath authority from the chief priests, to bind all that *call on thy name*." It is evident that all real Christians, or Saints, were persons who "called upon the name of the Lord. See likewise the twenty-first verse, "all that heard him," that is, converted Saul, "were amazed, and said, "Is not this he that destroyed them which *called on this name* in Jerusalem?" And in the first epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, first chapter and second verse, the apostle gives this description of Christians "unto the Church of Christ which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints; with all, that in every place *call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord*, both theirs and ours." Nothing can be more clear than that this was the character of the first Christians, that they called upon the name of the Lord Jesus, our common Lord, whom we, and all true Christians join in acknowledging and adoring as their Lord and ours.

Once more, we find a similar expression in the twenty-second of the Acts of the Apostles, and the sixteenth verse; there it is said to one, "Why tarriest thou? arise and be baptized; and wash away thy sins, *calling on the name of the Lord*." Here "calling on the name of the Lord," is united with baptism, which is certainly a solemn act of religious worship; and it is performed in the name of *Christ*, equally as in the name of the "Father and of the Holy Spirit." The commission is, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Baptism is an ordinance of consecration, or dedication to the service, of whom? The Father, Son, and Spirit, as one God; and I know not whether this may be the meaning of what we read of, in a very early part of the sacred Scriptures, namely in the days of Enos, the son of Seth. "Then men began to call on the name of the Lord," Gen. iv. Various views have been given of that Scripture, but "the name of the Lord" is very frequently a title given to Jesus Christ, in the Old Testament; and calling upon the name of the Lord, may bear the same meaning there, that it afterwards had; distinguishing between true believers in the Son of God, and those who rejected him.

Of a similar nature is the apostolic form of benediction generally used in Christian

churches, when the public service is concluded—"the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you"—and it is remarkable that, in some of these benedictions, the name of Jesus Christ stands first; not to denote superiority; but certainly, in the position of the sentence, cannot denote inferiority; and the order is changed in different places, perhaps to show that these Three are indeed One. The grand doctrine of the Trinity, including the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, whatever may be the efforts of adversaries, will never be banished from the Church, while these scriptural forms are retained in it.

And not only so, but we have instances of pious individuals calling upon the name of the Lord, and in the most peculiar and trying circumstances. For instance, the first Christian Martyr, Stephen. (Acts, vii. 59.) While they were stoning Stephen, he was calling upon God, or invoking, and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Who but God can receive, and preserve the departing spirit of a saint? and it is observable that these are the same words, or nearly the same words, which our blessed Lord addressed to his Father in his last moments upon the cross: so that this petition of Stephen ascribes the same power and grace to the Son, that the Son of God himself ascribed to the Father.

The Apostle Paul likewise speaks of himself, as paying this honor to the Son. 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.—when he was earnestly desirous of the removal of that thorn in the flesh, which he thought might hinder his usefulness—"For this thing, I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me; and he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness; most gladly therefore will I rather glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Jesus Christ is, doubtless, that Lord upon whom he called, and from whom he received this answer.

I will mention one more instance, that of the Apostle Thomas, after that fit of unbelief, as I may call it, when he declared he would never believe the resurrection of Christ without ocular demonstration of it: but, when he was convinced, "Thomas said unto him, My Lord and my God." Some would evade the force of this argument, by saying, it was only an exclamation, occasioned by sudden surprise; but I apprehend the apostles were not accustomed to this profanity of language; they

were not used to express themselves vainly and lightly, in taking into their lips the sacred name of God. It was therefore not a profane exclamation, but a solemn invocation; and it was as much as to say, Thou art my Lord and my God; though I did doubt of it, I now am perfectly convinced.

I shall only add, that the Apostle John recommends this worship of Christ, in his first epistle, chap. v. verses 13 and 14, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God; and this is the confidence that we have in Him, That, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know we have the petitions that we desired of him." Now it is observable, that, in the same epistle, chap. iii. ver. 22, the same mode of expression is used with reference to God the Father, "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him." Surely then, this affords a proof that the Lord Jesus Christ is properly the object of divine worship.

That these were the views of the primitive Christians, will be made to appear, from several instances recorded in ecclesiastical history, a few of which shall be mentioned.*

Ignatius, of Antioch, who suffered for the faith, about the year 117, and who had conversed with some of the apostles, thus begins one of his epistles;—"I glorify Jesus Christ our God, who hath given unto you this wisdom."

Again, Polycarp of Smyrna, another martyr, who suffered in the year 167, said, "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and Christ himself the eternal High Priest, the Son of God, build you up in faith, and truth, and in all meekness, to live without anger," &c. and when he was brought to the stake, he concluded his last prayer with this doxology to the Trinity, "I bless thee, I praise thee, I glorify thee for all things, together with the eternal and heavenly Jesus Christ, thy beloved Son, with whom, unto thee, and the Holy Spirit, be glory, both now and for ever, world without end;" which doxology seems to have been common in Christian churches, from that time to this.

There was another eminent man named Justin Martyr, who flourished about the middle of the second century; he uses these words, "We worship and adore the

* See a Sermon by bishop Horne, on Romans, x. 13, vol. v. p. 189.

God of righteousness, and his Son, and the holy Spirit of prophecy." Yet, a little after, he tells the emperor, "We hold it unlawful to worship any but God alone."

Again, in the Dioclesian persecution, Eusebius the historian says, "that the inhabitants of a city in Phrygia, men, women, and children, while assembled in the church, were surprised by their enemies, and burnt calling upon Christ, God over all."

To which I shall only add, it is well known that Pliny the historian, writing to the emperor concerning the Christians, mentions it as a common custom among them, to meet, on a certain day, before it was light, and sing a hymn to Christ as God. The testimonies fully prove that Jesus Christ was considered by the first Christians, as a proper object of religious adoration; or, according to the words of our text, that "they called upon the name of the Lord."

IMPROVEMENT.

Is calling upon the name of the Lord, the practice of real Christians—have we then done it? Do we know any thing of thus calling upon the name of the Lord? Some perhaps call upon the name of the Lord in a light, trifling, and profane way; this, alas! is to call down condemnation on their own souls; and it is very shocking to hear men, and women too, in the street, exclaiming, "O Christ!" But it is a blessed prayer, "O Christ, hear us and help us!" Or, as it is expressed in the Litany of the Established Church, "Son of God we beseech thee to hear us; O Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world; have mercy upon us—O Christ hear us—Christ have mercy upon us:" and what an encouragement does this text afford us when calling upon him! It is a positive promise, like that well-known Scripture—"Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

With what confidence may we call upon the name of the Lord, seeing that he is the Almighty God! We may derive much encouragement from the success of those who, when our Lord was upon earth, called upon him for various purposes. Let me remind you of a few instances. You recollect the poor miserable leper (Matt. viii. 2.) who fell down before him and said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." The gracious answer of our Lord was, "I will, be thou clean." When the centurion applied to Jesus in behalf of his servant, who was sick of the palsy and grievously tormented, he immediately said, "I will

come and heal him." When a certain ruler worshipped him, and said, "My daughter is even now dead; but come and lay thine hand upon her, and she shall live;" Jesus heard, and it was done. Again, a poor woman, who had been long diseased, touches the hem of his garment; her heart called upon him, though her lips were silent; the cure was granted, and "she was made whole from that hour." Two blind men cried aloud, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us," and their eyes were opened. The friends of a dumb man cried to him for help, and the dumb spake. Peter, sinking into the sea, cried, "Lord! save me. I perish!" The compassionate Savior caught him, and saved him. When the Canaanitish woman cried, "Have mercy upon me, thou Son of David, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil;" Jesus heard, and replied, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Time would fail us to recount all the instances of success, which attended those who cried to the Lord for temporal benefits; and can we suppose the compassionate heart of Jesus will feel less for us, when we call upon him for the salvation of our immortal souls? One instance more must be mentioned. When he was hanging upon the cross, between two malefactors, and when there seemed to be the least encouragement to call upon him as a Savior, one of the sufferers, whose heart God had touched with compunction, called upon him, and said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom;" he called not upon him in vain; Christ immediately and graciously answered, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." O, then, with what confidence may we call upon him, and rely upon him; and unite with the apostle in saying, "I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." Each of us has an immortal soul; what have we done with it? To whom was it offered? How was it employed? In the service of Christ, or of Satan? Have we committed it to Christ for salvation? He will receive it; he will keep it: he will be faithful to his trust. Well, then, let each of us resolve—"I will call upon him, as long as I live."

Now unto him, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, the one God of our salvation, be glory in all the churches; now and for evermore. Amen.

PRAYER—O LORD, who didst vouchsafe, though God over all, blessed for evermore, to

manifest thyself in our nature, we would call upon thy name, at once with reverence and godly fear, and with holy boldness and love. With them who had not seen thee, may we love thee;—with them who no longer saw thee, may we rejoice in thee, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Though we cannot, like the first disciples, inquire of thee, as our Teacher, whatever we desire to know, or ask thee in person for what we need, thou hast assured us, with them, that whatsoever we ask the Father, in thy name, thou wilt bestow! Thou sympathizest still with our infirmities, thou knowest all our temptations;—ever be with us, O Lord, and bring us, feeble and worthless as we are, to see and to partake of thy glory. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with us, and with all who, in every place, call upon the name of Jesus Christ the Lord, both theirs and ours! Amen.

SERMON XC.

THE SPIRITUAL RESURRECTION.

John v. 25. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

WHAT is true religion? This is a question, in the decision of which every person is deeply interested. True religion is more than a form of sound words; more than a Scriptural mode of worship and discipline; more than a course of decent and respectable morals. What more? According to our text, it is *a life—a new spiritual life*—the life of God in the soul of man; a spark, as it were of the divine nature—a birth derived from the Spirit of God.

Thus speaks my text. The words before us are full of majesty; they are the words of the Son of God, who “spake as never man spake;” and they were spoken in vindication of his character and mission against the cavils of the Jews. He had performed a great miracle at the pool of Bethesda; he had healed, in a moment, a poor man, who had been a cripple almost forty years: but the Jews, instead of being thereby convinced that he was the true Messiah, opposed and persecuted him. But he asserts his power to perform the same divine actions as his Father; and he claims the same divine honors. Now one of the most glorious displays of the divine power is the resurrection of the dead; and “as the Father raiseth the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.” This power, he declares in our text, shall accompany his word; and he introduces the declaration with his usual solemnity, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and

now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God.” There is a two-fold resurrection spoken of in this chapter, of both of which Christ is the author; the first is a spiritual resurrection, or the renewal of the souls of men who are dead in sins; and the other is a corporeal resurrection: or raising up the dead bodies of men from the grave. The first is spoken of in the text; the other is asserted in the 28th and 29th verses of this chapter: “Marvel not at this, for the hour is coming, in which all that are in the grave shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” Of the spiritual resurrection, intended in the text, he says, not only the hour cometh, but it now is: and doubtless divine power attended the discourse of which our text is a part; and God grant that the same power may now attend his word, that some here present may, at *this* hour, hear the voice of the Son of God and live.

Here let us notice the four following particulars.

First. The condition of all natural men—they are “dead.”

Secondly. The description of the Gospel—it is “the voice of the Son of God.”

Thirdly. The application of this with divine power—“the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God;” and,

Lastly. The happy effect of all this—“and they that hear shall live.”

First. Let us notice the condition of all natural men, as here described, “the *dead* shall hear.” Nothing, my friends, is of greater importance in practical religion, than to be well acquainted with our true state and condition, as fallen creatures, as the children of Adam, in whom we all fell from his original state, the state in which he was created. Upon this, therefore, the Scripture frequently insists; and to render us the better acquainted with it, it is illustrated by many similitudes. Here it is represented as *a state of death*; not that of the body, though that will assuredly follow, as the wages of sin; but that state of the soul, even in a living person, which unhappily resembles death. Thus St. Paul, when he congratulates the Ephesian Christians on their conversion, refers to their former condition before conversion. (Ephes. ii. 1.) He says, “You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;” and the same apostle, speaking of a person living in sin, (1 Tim. v. 6.) expressly says,

"She that liveth in pleasure, (luxuriously and carnally devoted to sensual passions) is dead whilst she liveth."

The propriety of this similitude will appear, if you recollect the following particulars. The dead are in a state of perfect ignorance: whatever is passing in the world, even among those who were their nearest and dearest relations and friends, they know it not. Whatever improvements are making in science; whatever revolutions take place upon earth, they know them not. And is not the state of every natural man, a state of ignorance? Yes; "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them," while remaining in that state, for "they must be spiritually discerned." The dead are totally inactive. As the tree falls so it lies: and thus it is with dead souls, the eye is closed to all the glorious objects of the Gospel. The ear is shut against all the charming sounds of grace. Not a breath of prayer ascends to God. Not a step is moved towards the heavenly world.

Death is a state of deformity. The once beautiful countenance is bereft of all its charms, and becomes shocking and ghastly. Abraham says, of his beloved Sarah, "Bury my dead out of my sight." And has not sin despoiled man of his original beauty; for once he was beautiful indeed; bearing the glorious resemblance of his great and holy Maker; but now, the holy God turns away with disgust from the sinner, for "He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity."

Putrefaction soon follows after death; for "all flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field."—More odious to the infinitely holy God is iniquity, obscenity, profaneness, and every other vice, than the putrefying carcass to the living mortals, for "the throat of the wicked"—his abominable language, is more noisome to God than an open sepulchre.

There is yet another respect in which man may be said to be dead,—he is in a state of condemnation. like a man under sentence of death, and who is therefore said to be "dead in law," though the sentence be not yet executed. Every man is a sinner, and because he is a sinner he stands condemned by the holy law of God; as it is written, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them," and unless such a person be relieved from that state by the Gospel, the "wrath of God abideth on him." Believers are, indeed, justified; they have

"passed from death unto life," but before a man believes in Christ, and so takes the benefit of the heavenly act of grace, he continues "in his sin," and "the wrath of God abides upon him; and not only so, but living under the Gospel, his unbelief creates an additional and worse offence, and exposes him to additional penalties; for "he that believeth not is condemned already; and condemned chiefly because he believeth not in the name of the only-begotten Son of God." But let us proceed,

In the second place, to consider that description of the Gospel which is given us in the text—"The dead shall hear"—hear what?—"The voice of the Son of God," and that voice is no other than the word of Christ, in and by the Gospel.

It is generally understood that, at the great day, the Son of God will descend from heaven in great glory, and then, according to the twenty-eighth verse of this chapter, "all that are in their graves shall hear his voice and come forth." We conceive, as we ought, very highly of that majestic voice, accompanied, as it will be, with the exertion of power truly Almighty; when all the countless millions of the dead, long before mingled with the dust, shall reassume the human form, and, reanimated with the human spirit, shall ascend to stand at the tribunal of Christ. To this is compared, in our text, the voice of the Son of God in the Gospel. How great and glorious then is that Gospel, which is "the power of God unto salvation!" for, observe, it is the same voice which shall hereafter raise the dead bodies of men from the grave, which now raises the dead soul from its state of nature and sin.

Our blessed Lord once resided on our earth; he travelled about Judea and Galilee, preaching the kingdom of God from city to city, from town to town, from village to village; in the temple, in the synagogue, on the mountains, in ships—wherever he had an opportunity—wherever an audience could be collected: but he has long since left our world, and transferred this work to other and meaner hands. The apostles were his first messengers; and when their labors were finished, the great work devolved on the ordinary pastors and teachers of the churches. Preaching the Gospel is a divine ordinance, to be continued to the end of time: and those whom he has qualified for it, and called to it, he will bless in the discharge of their duty; according to his gracious promise, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto

the end of the world." Let every divine truth, then, though declared by the lips of fallible men; men of like passions with yourselves, be received, not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the word of God: (1 Thess. ii. 13.) and let the apostolic admonition be duly regarded, "See that ye refuse not him who speaketh from heaven;" for the Gospel, though it may be uttered by fallible lips, is a record or testimony, from heaven, witnessed by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; (1 John, v. 10.) and it is at our peril that we neglect it.

Consider also the inestimable value of this word. It clearly *informs* us, concerning the great things which belong to our peace; and "the entrance of this word" into the mind "giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple." This word likewise faithfully *warns* us; it kindly sets before us the dreadful danger that awaits the impenitent sinner; according to that which was stated to be the proper business of the prophet of old, when God said to him; (Ezek. iii. 17, and 18,) "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me: when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hand." The apostle Paul felt the force of this admonition; and he told the Ephesian elders, when he was taking leave of them, (Acts, 20,) that he was "pure from the blood of all men, for he had not shunned to declare unto them the whole counsel of God"—that "he had not ceased, by the space of three years, to warn and beseech every one of them, night and day, with tears." Undoubtedly, the same is still the duty of every minister of the Gospel.

In this word also, he affectionately *invites* us. He bids us "seek him, while he may be found;" he assures us, that if "the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, the Lord will have mercy upon him, and abundantly pardon." All things needful for the salvation of man, being prepared and proposed, he invites all, even those who are to be found in "the highways and hedges," to come and partake of the Gospel feast, "all things being ready:"—yea, he says, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

In this word also, he graciously and

faithfully *promises* a ready welcome; yea, he says, (and what more could we have wished him to say,) "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." We are,

In the third place, to consider the application of this word to the heart, with divine power—"the dead shall *hear* the voice of the Son of God." The dead *hear*? This is an extraordinary thing indeed!—The dead hear? How can this be? No human sounds; not the shrill blast of the trumpet, nor the horrible roar of the cannon, nor the tremendous peal of thunder, can affect the ear of the dead: yet, "the *dead shall hear* the voice of the Son of God," for that which is impossible to men, is easy to God.

On one memorable occasion, our blessed Lord visited the grave of his friend Lazarus; and when, amidst a numerous company, surrounding the tomb, "Jesus cried with a loud voice, Lazarus come forth:" behold, with astonishment, "he that was dead, came forth." This is amazing! Lazarus hears the voice of the Son of God, and lives; he comes forth, and entertains the Savior in his house. It is doubtless in allusion to such an effect of divine power as this, on a dead body, that our Lord speaks of the resurrection of a dead soul; and does it not plainly intimate that nothing less than such a power is sufficient for this purpose?—If we know the Scriptures; if we know ourselves, we shall readily admit that men are so profoundly and wilfully ignorant; and oftentimes so hardened in their feelings; so wedded to the world; so full of enmity against God and religion; that nothing less than almighty power can effect the change here described,—"the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God."

In this case, the person feels, for the first time, a disposition to hear and regard the word of life, however strong his prejudices might have been before. It is said of Lydia, who was converted to God at Philippi, that "the Lord opened her heart, so that she *attended* to the things which were spoken of Paul." Had not the Lord *opened her heart*, she would not have attended to them: for it is marvellous that the word of God is not *heard* even where it is *spoken*; and were you to go from pew to pew, in our places of worship, you would find very few who heard it with *attention*, and fewer still, with *understanding*. The birds of the air take up the seed as soon as it is sown—it has no abiding in the heart of man—And thus many persons attend to hear sermons, who never do

hear. O what sin is committed in all our places of worship while the sermon is preaching!

Others are attentive, in some degree; yet they do not *understand* what they hear: but when the Lord speaks to the heart, he causes his voice to be distinguished, and his people know the meaning of it; as the apostle speaks of the Thessalonians, that "they received the word, not as the word of man, but as it is, in truth, the word of God." And here is the difference between carnal and spiritual hearers; the carnal hearers go to hear the *man*; the spiritual hearers go to hear *Christ*, through the man; their language is—"Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

When the word is heard to purpose, it is heard with *faith*. The word never profits, unless it be "mixed with faith." (Heb. ii.) It is received as the testimony of God, divinely and infallibly true; and he who hears it as the voice of the Son of God, affixes his seal to it, and thereby declares his belief that God is true.

And if the word be thus mixed with faith, it will also be "received with *love*," with cordial esteem and affection. "As new-born babes," the children of God imbibe "the milk of the word;" and each of them can truly say, "How sweet are thy words to my taste! they are sweeter than honey and the honey-comb." "O how love I thy law!"

Once more—He who hears the voice of the Son of God in his word, will hear it *obediently*. When Saul of Tarsus first heard this voice, and knew whose voice it was, he very properly said, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Such will be the language of every true believer; there will be a cordial approbation of the divine commandments, as "holy, just, and good," and he will say, with sincerity, "Lord have mercy upon me, and write all these thy laws upon my heart, I beseech thee."

I proceed now to the last particular before us, and that is, the happy effect of all this; "the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and *they that hear shall live*." As Lazarus lived, from the moment that Christ uttered his voice, and said "Lazarus come forth," so sinners, having heard the quickening voice of Christ in the Gospel, commence a new and spiritual life, which shall never cease, but shall issue in life eternal. We said, at the beginning of this discourse, that religion is a Life; there is a new principle implanted in the souls of men; a principle of motion, of perception, of enjoyment; something

that is active and permanent in its nature; according to another figure of speech, used for the same purpose by our Lord, in his discourse with the woman of Samaria; "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."—Here is the abiding, active principle; that which we call life, and in which there is a gradual progression; the babe, the young man, and the father in Christ.

The word of Christ is the instrument of regeneration; "Of his own will," says St. James, "he begat us with the word of truth;" and hence we are said to be "born of God."

All such persons are said to live, according to the 24th verse, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life; he shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." We read also in the fifth chapter to the Romans, of "Justification unto life." The believer is brought into a new state; and "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," makes him free from the law of sin and death.

It is also a life of *Comfort*, to which we are called, for, being "justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." There is satisfaction and pleasure in the word, and ways, and people of God. Believers delight in his service, and find a day in his courts, better than a thousand: they had rather be door-keepers in the house of God, than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

Further, it is a life of *Holiness*. Those who live, "live to the Lord." They are "alive to God, through Jesus Christ;" they are "redeemed to God;" they are no longer the servants of sin; they no longer live to themselves, but to the Lord; his will being their rule, his honor the great end of all their actions; and then

A life of *Glory* shall crown the whole. This is God's great object; and therefore the believer is said already to "have everlasting life." The title to it he possesses in Christ Jesus, and the first fruits of it are received in the graces and influences of the Holy Ghost.

Thus we have endeavored to show the condition of all natural men: they are dead; in the description of the Gospel, it is the voice of the Son of God; the application of this with power, the dead shall hear; and the happy effects of the whole, they that hear shall live.

CONCLUSION.

How wonderful is the condescension of Christ! He speaks, he speaks even to dead sinners.—To us, even to us, “is the word of this salvation sent!” and O what importance does this give to the preaching of the Gospel, to the reading of the Scriptures, and to all divine ordinances! It is the voice of the Son of God. We should remember, whenever we attend them, that we are all present before God; we come to hear the voice of the Son of God. And O let us take care that we hearken to this voice. Does he speak, and shall we not hear? Shall we turn a deaf ear to the calls and entreaties of the Savior? Behold, says he, “I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.” Doubtless it is the character of all true Christians, that they hear the voice of the Son of God. Beware, then, of neglecting or refusing to hear him; for it is written, “If any man will not hear this prophet, he shall be cut off from among the people;” and if any finally refuse to hearken to him, how awful will be his condition another day! Then will he say, “Ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; therefore, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh.” But if, through Grace, we have been enabled, as some of us doubtless have been, to hear his gracious voice, let us, with joy, receive and rely upon the assurance he gives us in the text, that we shall live,—“he that heareth shall live!” May this be our happiness, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

PRAYER.—Thou knowest, O Lord, what is in man!—thou gavest him not only animal, but spiritual life;—but he forfeited both; and lost the knowledge of that good which thou hadst conferred upon him, rather than abstain from the knowledge of evil, which thou hadst forbidden to him; but while our first parents, and all their posterity, thus became dead to thee, how greatly hast thou magnified thy grace, through Jesus Christ, the Light and the Life of men! We confess, and we deplore, that although alive to our sensual appetites and worldly interests, we are naturally dead to thee, our only source of safety and happiness. If alive to the terrors of thy wrath, we are still dead to the attractions of thy love, till thou impartest thy Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds to discern thy glory and thy grace. Draw us, O heavenly Father, by thy judgments and thy mercies, till, convinced of our death-like state, we may hearken to the gracious voice of thy Son, and live—not to ourselves, but to him; so, when all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and come forth, may we rise, not as he, to shame and everlasting contempt,—but to everlasting life, through Jesus Christ! Amen.

SERMON XCI.

THE PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST.

Ephesians, iv. 20, 21, But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus.

THE Gospel of Jesus Christ provides the only efficacious remedy for all the diseases of the moral world—the only effectual relief to fallen, guilty, dying man. We have, at all times, occasion to blush for the vices of mankind, and especially for those of our native country; but, bad as things are, they would be infinitely worse if the influences of the Gospel were withdrawn; if the doctrines of Christ were not preached; if Christian examples were not exhibited. Multitudes among us, who are not real and spiritual Christians, happily differ much from men in a heathen state; from such men as are described by St. Paul in the verses preceding our text. Exhorting believers to a holy conduct, he says, verse 17, “This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,” &c. &c. Such is the faithful but melancholy picture which, from having resided two years at Ephesus, he was enabled from his personal knowledge to draw; but the Gospel of Christ, preached by himself and others, had produced in many persons a happy change. Many, who were once in total darkness, had been savingly enlightened; many, who had been dead in trespasses and sins, had been spiritually quickened; many, who were once “far from God,” had been “brought nigh by the blood of Christ;” and now, he affectionately exhorts them, in this chapter, to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they had been called,” ver. 1. They must differ from their still Pagan neighbors, who wallowed in vice; for, says he in our text, “ye have not so learned Christ,” or rather—“not so ye—for ye have learned Christ;” having learned of Christ, ye must learn to live *like Christ*. He who taught you, is *himself* holy, and requires you also to be holy.

This sentiment is applicable to all the professed disciples of Christ; to us my brethren, as well as to the Ephesians. The text then presents to us the following most valuable lesson:

Those who are taught by Christ, are under the strongest obligations to walk according to his instructions.

To illustrate and enforce this sentiment, let us, I. Consider what is meant by being

taught by Christ; and 2. The obligations under which they are laid who are so instructed.

1. What is meant by being taught of Christ—our text speaks of *learning Christ*—of having *heard him*, and of having been *taught by him*; as the truth is in Jesus. These expressions may include *learning of him*, as our teacher; and *learning him*, as the great *subject* of his teaching: for he is both the Master and the subject.

Christ is the great Teacher of the world. Ineffectual were all the efforts of heathen sages to enlighten the world. The great philosophers had done little or nothing to better the condition of mankind at large. St. Paul, who well knew what their attempts had been, declares that, after all, “the world by wisdom knew not God”—it was reserved for his own Son to enlighten mankind. Some of the wisest of the heathen sages were honest enough to confess their ignorance, and to declare their expectation of the great Teacher. That Teacher at length appeared. For several years he went about Judea, diffusing heavenly wisdom wherever he went, with a simplicity and dignity that astonished his hearers, and constrained them to say, “Never man spake like this man.” Having finished his work upon earth, he confided the business of instruction to other hands; qualifying them for it by his Holy Spirit, and promising to succor their efforts by his own presence and blessing.

The apostle says that the Ephesians had “heard him, and had been taught by him.” Not *personally* indeed; for Christ never visited *Ephesus*; but *ministerially*. The apostles and other teachers had “the mind of Christ;” his Spirit had led them into all truth; and both by their preaching and their writing they published it to the world.

We also are still favored with the word of Christ. Many of our Lord’s admirable discourses were committed to writing by the four Evangelists. The apostles also wrote many epistles to churches or individuals; which epistles are of no less authority than the Gospels; and taken together with the Old Testament (which is also “the word of Christ”) we may still be said to have heard and learned of him. His truth, ministerially declared to us, in and by his ordinance of public preaching, or perused by us in private, is to be received, “not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God; which is able to make us wise to salvation, through faith in him.” Hence we are exhorted, Heb. xii. 25, to beware “that we refuse

not him that speaketh from heaven,” and see we are no less bound to regard the written word, than if we heard the voice of Christ himself. This Gospel delivered to us, is “the savor of life unto life, or the savor of death unto death,” and the original sanction still attends it. “He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be condemned.”

But Christ is not only the great Teacher, but he is *himself* the chief subject of all divine teaching. Our text speaks of the truth “as it is in *Jesus*”—he is, as it were, the centre in which all the lines of divine truth meet—he is the great subject of the Gospel; so that “preaching Christ,” and “preaching the Gospel,” are the same thing; according to what St. Paul intimates as to his own practice, he was “determined not to know any thing among the people, but Jesus Christ and him crucified.” And the words may also refer to the purity of the doctrine taught; to know the truth “as it is in Jesus,” is to know and receive the pure unadulterated truth, as it was at first delivered by him and his apostles; and without that mixture of error, which the weakness or wickedness of men has since introduced. Or it may farther intimate that to know the truth aright, is to know it *practically*, as not only taught by the *lips* of Jesus, but as also beautifully exemplified in his holy *life*; in his harmless, devout, and benevolent practice; for Christ taught by his example, as well as by his doctrine.

But I think we are to understand by the words chiefly this—that Jesus Christ, and salvation by him, is the sum and substance of what we are to learn. “I am,” said Christ, “the truth”—the substance of the numerous ordinances of the Old Testament—of their priesthood, their altar, their sacrifices, their washings—they were “the shadows of good things to come;” and they did come, in and with Christ, who is the body, the substance, the soul of them all.

Thus, when St. Paul reproves the Galatians for entertaining some dangerous errors about justification, he aggravates their fault, by saying “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you.”

It is plain that what he distinguished by the name of “the truth”—was, the Gospel method of salvation by Jesus Christ—the acceptance and justification of a sinner, through faith in the blood and righteousness of Christ. In short, that great

doctrine which is represented in so solemn a manner by St. John, in his first epistle, fifth chapter, and called a *testimony* or *record*, testified by the Three in heaven and Three on earth, which is this, that "GOD HATH GIVEN TO US ETERNAL LIFE; AND THIS LIFE IS IN HIS SON."

We by no means exclude from the truth, the DUTIES which devolve upon believers; for we shall presently show that those are not only necessarily connected, but form an essential part of it.

Indeed, to know the truth of the Gospel aright, is to be taught by the Holy Spirit, not merely words and propositions of truth: or to yield the assent of the understanding to them—it is far more; the *heart* as well as the head is influenced; divine things, truly learned, have a powerful influence on the affections of the soul, on the temper and disposition of the heart, and upon the whole conduct, allowing for those deviations and imperfections, which, alas, are found in the best of men.

This is strongly implied in the text, and forms the second branch of our discourse; for the apostle is, you will recollect, exhorting the Ephesians to walk differently from the unconverted heathen, and to be renewed in the spirit of their mind, and, in a word, to become new creatures.

And here we may observe, that the text, with many other similar passages in Scripture, plainly intimates that some who professed to regard the Gospel, disregarded its practical influence.

The Gospel must be allowed to be "a good message"—"glad tidings of great joy," and well calculated to excite the attention, the affectionate attention of men in general. And it would do so universally, were it not for the strong and unhappy prejudices of the carnal mind. Hence we find, that, although it be "the wisdom of God" and "the power of God," it is rejected by some as foolish and irrational, and by others, as even immoral in its tendency. This is intimated by St. Paul, (Rom. vi. 1.) "What shall we say then? Shall we sin, that grace may abound?" And more distinctly, (Rom. iii. 8,)—"And not (as we are slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil that good may come;" to which he adds, "whose damnation is just;" that is, the condemnation of those who teach and practise such things, is both certain and just. And St. Jude (ver. 4, of his epistle) speaks of "false teachers, ungodly men, who turned the grace of God (that is, the Gospel of his grace) into lasciviousness;

perverting the Holy Gospel into an encouragement to vice.

But this was never the doctrine nor the practice of the apostles and first Christians. Yet we are not to be surprised, if there were some unhappy instances of Antinomian perverseness. The Gospel, especially when it becomes the religion of a nation, embraces persons of every description, according to the parable of the net, (Matt. viii. 47.) "The kingdom of heaven (the dispensation of the Gospel) is like unto a net that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind, good and bad:" and agreeably to another parable, in which the tares and the wheat are represented as growing together in the same field. St. James also speaks largely of "dead faith;" a faith "without works;" a faith which does not work, as true faith always does, "by love." But let not St. James be mistaken. He does not assert that true faith may exist without works; for, as faith refers to the testimony of God as believed, he that rejects the necessity of holiness, rejects an essential part of that testimony; for the Gospel insists both on "the water and the blood" which issued from the side of the crucified Savior, denoting the double virtue of his death, to purify the heart, as well as to purge the conscience.

There may be a high degree of scriptural knowledge, without real grace. St. Paul (1 Cor. xiii.) supposes the possibility of having "all knowledge," and yet being destitute of the essential grace of love, which always accompanies genuine faith. The apostle John is very explicit: he says, (1 Eph. i. 6,) "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and *walk in darkness*,"—that is, "practise wickedness," we lie, and do not the truth,—we do not act agreeably to the true and holy doctrine of the Gospel.

Again. The direction given by the apostles to the churches, as to their conduct towards bad men, ordering them to be excluded from their communion, render it plain that holiness is the law of God's house. And awful beyond description or conception, will be the proceedings in the judgment of the great day of Christ, when all men shall appear before his tribunal, and when all shall be judged according to (the evidence of) their works. The largest account we hear of that decisive day, is from the lips of the Great Judge himself, recorded in the 25th chap. of St. Matthew, which account, you will observe, relates only to the trial of the

professors of the Gospel, and the sentences then to be pronounced will proceed upon the evidence adduced—the evidence of the fruits of faith, or of the want of them.

Whatever be the conduct of professed Christians, the Gospel gives no countenance whatever to unholy tempers or ungodly practices. On the contrary, it always and everywhere insists upon holiness; upon dying to sin, and living to righteousness; and positively declares, that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”

Our Lord, in his charming intercessory prayer, (John xvii.) prays thus for his disciples, “Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth;” and it appears from the commission he gave to the apostle of the Gentiles, that he was sent “to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, that they might ultimately obtain an inheritance among all them that *are sanctified through faith in Christ.*” And this effect was actually produced, and the evidence that the Gentiles were really converted was, that God had “purified their hearts by faith.”

Let us now state some of the obligations under which believers are laid, to walk agreeably to the holy Gospel.

1. The unchangeable authority of God. While God is God, and men are his creatures, they must be bound to obey his known will. Their obligation to obedience is not discharged or weakened by their being brought into a new state by grace. They have additional helps, not known to the law, but no discharge from its obligations. They do not, indeed, obey with a view to merit life and the favor of God; nor will their partial failures issue in death; but the authority of God over them is not vacated or diminished. The holy and unchangeable law of God, as to the *substance* of it, is *love*; love to him and love to our fellow-men; and this according to the stipulations of the covenant of grace, is written by the Spirit on the heart. Some express themselves too loosely on this subject; they say believers will love God, and love will compel them to obedience; it will so; and so far they say well; but why set aside the authority of God to command, and the duty of believers to obey?

2. We argue the necessity of a holy walk, from the whole of the Savior's gracious designs and undertakings in behalf of his church.

The first intimation of his designs was, that “he should bruise the serpent's head,” that is destroy his power, counteract his temptations, and restore man from the

guilt and misery of the fall. But can this be done without restoring him to the exercise of love and obedience?

Consider the offices of Christ. He is a **PROPHET**; he teaches the whole will of God; and an important branch of that will is our sanctification. He deputed his apostles to “teach men to observe all things, whatsoever he commanded them.” We know in what a spiritual manner he expounded the law, and pointed out its purity. His disciples ought to make that their constant rule, and be satisfied with nothing less than complete conformity to it; and in this they are assisted by the Gospel; therein, “as in a glass they behold the glory of the Lord, and are transformed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord.” And this is the argument in the text—Ye have learned Christ, ye have been taught by him. Christ is a holy teacher, and he makes holy disciples; if we are not such, we are not his true disciples.

He is also a **PRIEST**. The work of a priest was to offer gifts and sacrifices for the people, and also to intercede for them. What one branch of Christ's intercession for his people is, we have already seen; it is that they may be kept from the evil; that they may be holy. To take away guilt was not the only, though it was the first, design of the sacrifice of Christ: he had a further object; he gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity; that he might purify “to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” (Titus ii. 14.) He died for us who were dead, that we, who live through him, might not live to ourselves, or to sin, but unto him who died for us and rose again. (2 Cor. v. 14.)

Jesus Christ is likewise a **KING**; as such he reigns in us and over us. He opposes and restrains both our outward enemies, and our inward lusts. He will not suffer sin to have dominion over us. Other lords have had dominion, but now he assumes the throne of the heart, and will not endure a rival. The words which follow our text show what was the design of the writer.—If we truly learn of Christ, then, saith he—“put off the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts, and put on the new man, which is created in righteousness and true holiness”—or, “the holiness of truth;” and the apostle proceeds to point out particulars; he speaks against lying, excessive anger, dishonesty, improper conversation, bitterness, clamor, and slander; and exhorts to industry, love, and generosity; in short, saith he, “Be imitators of God, as his dear children.”

3. A third obligation arises from gratitude—the love of Christ constraineth us; and love is the fulfilling of the law. Of old, God enforced his commandments on Israel, from the consideration of the great things he had done for them. *Exod. xx. 2. “I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage,” and we, as Christians, are hereby taught that, “because God is the Lord, and our God, and Redeemer, therefore we are bound to keep all his commandments;” because, “he hath delivered us out of the hand of our enemies,” we are by gratitude constrained “to serve him, without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our life.”

4. Another argument for holy living is derived from our own personal comfort, which is best promoted thereby. One grand evidence of personal interest in Christ, arises from the fruits of faith. “There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ,” and who are they? they are such as walk, not according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. (Rom. viii. 1.) and St. John says, “Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments;” and again, “He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk even as He walked,” (1 John ii. 3—6.) Conscience, it is true, derives its peace first from the blood of Christ; but a holy life affords an additional evidence, by which the reality of our faith is made evident both to ourselves and others.

5. The glory of God, and the good of men, require that we should walk worthy of our vocation. The end that God has in view in all his works is his own glory; it is fit that should also be our end. Christ has assured us that his Father is glorified by our bringing forth much fruit; let this then be our constant aim. Our Lord’s direction is, “Let your light shine before men, that, seeing your good works, they may glorify your Father who is in heaven.” There is a language in a holy and useful life that cannot be misunderstood; that speaks to the heart; that silences opposition, destroys prejudice, and adorns the doctrine of God our Savior. This St. Peter recommends to the first Christians, against whom all manner of evil was falsely spoken; “Having,” says he, “your conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak evil of you, as evil-doers, they may, by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.”

IMPROVEMENT.

Two great lessons may be learned from this discourse—To KNOW CHRIST—and To

LIVE CHRIST. To be taught by him; and then to prove that we *are* so taught, by our holy obedience to his will.

1. Let every one of us be concerned to know him. “It is for our life.” Remember the words of our Savior, (John xvii. 3,) “This is eternal life, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” Life is short, and this is the principal business of it. Lose then no opportunity. Improve especially the Lord’s Day. Be a diligent hearer of the word; and hear it more than once every Sabbath if possible. Let the hours before sermon, between sermons, and after sermons, be well employed; and some part of them in secret. Avoid Sunday visitings; they are the bane of religious profession, and tend to undo in the house all that has been done in the church; unless, which is too seldom the case, the time is devoted to religious exercises; but nothing must exclude *closet religion*. On week days too, find some time for hearing the word. Most people find some leisure for visits and amusements; and can none be found for lectures and meetings for social prayer? Daily read the Scriptures; in so doing, Christ, by his Spirit, will be your teacher, and you will grow in grace and in the knowledge of him.

O what a shame and a sin will it be for any persons to abide in darkness, who dwell in this land of light! How much better would it have been for such to have been born in heathen countries than in this, if the means of grace be wholly neglected!

Is this knowledge, in some happy degree, already attained? Prize it above all acquisitions, and be thankful to your heavenly Teacher. With holy Paul, “account all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ.”

Finally, Let believers evince the excellency of their knowledge, by its holy and excellent effects. The reality and solidity of our professed knowledge must be manifested by its practical effects. “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.” “Ye are my friends,” said Christ to his disciples, “if ye do whatsoever I have commanded you.” Thus let us “hold forth the word of life,” by a conversation “void of offence towards God and all men;” this will convince the world that we have been with Jesus, and that we have so learned of him, as to have become “wise unto salvation.”

PRAYER.—O LORD, who madest all things good, what misery hath sin brought upon mankind! The abodes of them who have not heard of Christ are habitations of cruelty, lust, and

lothesome idolatry. Behold them with pity, gracious God, offering each other victims to devils, murdering their infants, torturing their own limbs, abandoned to unnatural crimes, and glutting their appetites with human flesh and blood! Such were our ancestors, till they were taught the truth as it is in Christ;—such might we still have been, but that to us the word of salvation is sent; but, alas! how are crimes yet multiplied among us; and of how many who are deterred from ruinous vices, how plain is it that they have not the love of God in them, but are still lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God! How many even turn the grace of God to licentiousness! Preserve us, Lord, from doing so. May we so hear thy word, so learn the truth in Christ, as to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts,—living soberly, justly, and piously in this present world,—waiting for his appearance, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto himself; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory for ever! Amen.

SERMON XCII.

THE HAPPY BELIEVER.

Luke i. 45. And blessed is she that believed, for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

THESE words were spoken, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, by Elizabeth the mother of John the Baptist, to Mary the mother of our blessed Lord. When Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth, and entered her house, the latter no sooner heard the voice of the former, than (the babe leaped in her womb; and) she broke forth into that congratulation of which the text is a part, pronouncing her to be truly happy, who had given credit to the promise which God had made to her concerning the infant Jesus, who should be born of her, and assuring her that whatever the Lord had spoken to her should certainly be accomplished.

But, though these words were spoken in a way of congratulation to a certain individual, and upon an occasion altogether singular, yet they may with equal truth be addressed to every believer, of each sex. Blessed art thou, believer, for there shall be a performance to thee, of all the precious promises which God hath made in his holy word. The observation we may derive from these words is this:—

They are truly happy persons who rely upon the promises of God in his Gospel, for they may confidently expect their fulfilment.

When we take a view of the nature and tendency of the Gospel, it is evident that real Christians are entitled to happi-

ness. The word *Gospel* denotes as much; for it signifies *good news* or a *good message*. In the Old Testament the promised coming of the Savior is always represented as an occasion of the greatest gladness. The prophet Isaiah says, “O thou that tellest good things to Zion, get thee up into the high mountain; O thou that tellest good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up thy voice with strength, say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!” These glad tidings should be universally proclaimed. (Isa. xl. 9, &c.) And when, in the fullness of time, God became incarnate; when the eternal Word was made flesh, and came to dwell with men, a multitude of the heavenly host burst forth into that joyful chorus, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.” Luke ii. 14. And when the pious Simeon, who was one of those that waited for the Consolation of Israel, had embraced the infant Savior in his arms, he wished to live no longer; he was completely happy, and cried, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.”

Observe also the immediate effect of receiving the Gospel, by the first Christians; those who “gladly received the word” professed it, and associated together; and they eat their meat with “gladness and singleness of heart;”—the joy of their souls in the great salvation, gave an additional relish to the comforts of life. When Philip, the Evangelist, went down to Samaria, and preached Christ to the people, “there was great joy in that city;” and when the jailer of Philippi suddenly received the good news of the Gospel from the mouth of his prisoners, Paul and Silas, “he rejoiced with all his house;” and this joy took place immediately, on the simple belief of the truth, and before there was time to exhibit the fruits and evidences of faith, which no doubt were afterwards exhibited, and which are produced in every sincere believer. Such is the nature, and such the effect of the Gospel, cordially received; for the kingdom of Christ consisteth not in ceremonial observances, but “in righteousness, in peace, and in the joy of the Holy Ghost.”

It is nevertheless a certain truth, that many pious persons, of whose sincerity there can be no doubt, do not enjoy this happiness, at least not in any great degree, nor with constancy. They are oftentimes dejected, and troubled with much anxiety, and many distressing doubts and fears. Now, as the Gospel is calculated to promote joy and peace, there must be

something wrong in a sincere disciple of Christ if these be not possessed,—if distressing fears generally prevail. It is therefore of great importance to find out the causes of this evil, and, if possible, prescribe a certain remedy.

Upon inquiry, I think it will be found that the principal causes are (1.) Imperfect views of the Gospel of Christ, and a mistaken apprehension that its blessings are *conditionally* bestowed, so that something good in the sinner must first be produced, which may authorize him to hope in Christ; or (2.) A dependence, more or less, on some good qualities in, or good actions done by himself, the discovery of which enlivens his hope, and the supposed absence of which destroys it, and leaves him the prey of guilt and fear.

The following case frequently occurs. I see a person convinced of sin, humbled for it, seriously apprehensive of its awful desert, dreading the anger of an offended God, and desirous, above all things, of escaping from the wrath to come. I will suppose that person to be also, in some degree enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, convinced of the value and efficacy of his blood, and earnestly wishing to be interested in him; he looks to Jesus as his only refuge, and, at times, possesses an humble, feeble, variable hope. When attending divine ordinances, when hearing the heart-cheering doctrines of grace, when listening to the charming invitations and promises of Christ, his heart is warmed, his fears subside, and his soul is happy. But, alas! this pleasing frame soon vanishes; he looks again at himself, he feels that he is yet a sinner, his fears return, and he is again miserable.

methinks I hear such a one exclaiming "It is true; the Gospel is most excellent, and Jesus Christ is infinitely precious: but what pretensions have I to his blessings? I,—who am every way so unworthy and vile!—I, who am the chief of sinners! If I look at my prayers, they deserve not the name of prayers, they are so cold, so wandering! My corruptions are many and strong; surely, real Christians are not like me; and as to my religious attainments, they bear no proportion to those of others, nor to the many privileges I have enjoyed. I look for the acknowledged evidences of a gracious state, and I can find but few, and sometimes none at all. What then must I do?"—And if a person in this state of mind should, at the same time, be the subject of such diseases as enervate the body and depress the spirits, he may be reduced to a pitiable condition; and if to

all this be added the assaults of the tempter, who will not fail to take the advantage of his weakness, he may be brought low indeed, and walk for many days in the valley of the shadow of death.

But what is the meaning of these complaints? What is the genuine language of these feelings and fears? Is it not this? I want to find something good in myself to build my hope upon; or at least, something so good as may encourage me to hope in Christ; for I cannot think of trusting in him just as I am. If I were more humble and more holy, then, perhaps, he would receive me, and I might venture, without presumption, to hope in his mercy. Few persons perhaps will speak thus, in so many words, but this is the real meaning of their objections; they want the "wine and milk" of the Gospel, and they are "come to the waters" for them; but they are not yet content to "buy without money and without price." (Isa. lv. 1.) They are not content to let Christ "justify the ungodly;"—or to "save that which is lost"—and "without strength;" but they wish to find some previous *qualification* in themselves; and for want of this they despond.

Here then are those imperfect views of the Gospel which prove such an hindrance to the exercise of simple faith, believing the testimony and promises of God concerning Jesus Christ, and concerning all those who look to him, receive him, come to him, and trust in him. For to those who are in the state we have described, this is the remedy proposed. Isa. l. 10. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord" (that is, in Christ) "and stay upon his God." In the absence of every other source of consolation, let him trust alone in the all-sufficient Redeemer. A belief that Jesus is able to save to the uttermost, and will cast out none that come to him, will relieve the burthened mind at once, and afford peace and joy;—peace to the conscience, and joy to the heart.

Another great hindrance to the joy of faith is, making too much of EVIDENCES; that is, building too much upon them, and deriving hope from them rather than from Christ himself and the atonement of his blood.

I would not discard Evidences; God forbid! the Scriptures of truth propose them. For instance, "To you who believe, he is precious." "If ye love me, keep my commandments." "We know

that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."—From these and many similar passages, the Christian may warrantably derive comfort; and the truth of our faith must be tried by the fruits of our faith,—for true 'faith worketh by love.'

It is not against the *use*, but against the *abuse* of evidences that we argue. Let them have their proper, that is, their secondary and subordinate place; but let us first look to Jesus, as exhibited in the testimony and promises of the Gospel; and with confidence rely on divine faithfulness to make those promises good to *us*; for, if we are not on our guard, our minds may be strangely diverted from Christ, to a dependence not upon his work *for us*, but rather to that wrought *in us*, the imperfection of which will always render our peace imperfect.

Let the Christian examine himself. He ought to do it. Let him inquire into the state of his heart, and "prove his own work;" but let him look where and at what he may, he will find defects and imperfections; such imperfections as will often leave him in doubt whether his graces are genuine or not; and the deeper acquaintance he has with the deceitfulness of his own heart, the greater will be his suspicions, and the less his confidence; so that, after all his inquiries, he will find it necessary to resort to the Savior, and build his hope alone on him.

But evidences are chiefly abused when they are made meritorious qualifications for trusting in Christ; when they are made the foundation of our claim to the pardoning mercy of God, through the blood of Jesus. If the language of the heart be,—“If I am deeply humbled for sin; if I can pray with fluency and fervency; if I can overcome my corruptions, and practise the duties of holiness, then may I venture to come to Christ and hope in him.” But this is reversing the proper order of things; for we are not first to make ourselves holy, and then apply to Christ for pardon; but we are first of all to believe the Gospel and receive a free pardon from him, and then being “sanctified through faith in him,” we are to bring forth the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory of the Father. To do otherwise, to attempt to make ourselves, in any way or degree, worthy of Christ, is only to imitate (though in a refined and delusive way) the conduct of the self-righteous Jews, lamented by St. Paul, “who went about to establish their own righteousness, not submitting

themselves to the righteousness of Christ.” Rom. x. 3. If this course be pursued, their hopes will rise or fall with every change of frame: I had almost said, with every change of weather.

Having, as I trust, detected a great mistake, let me now point out a more excellent way: “let me direct your attention to the following particulars:—

1. The Facts recorded in the Gospel;
2. The Testimony and Promises of God connected with them;
3. The Credence to be given to these; and,
4. The happy effect of giving that credence.

The Gospel includes a series of the most important events that ever took place in our world, and which took place exactly in the manner which had been predicted from age to age by the prophets. “When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son;” “God was manifest in the flesh.” He was declared to be the Son of God with power, by voices from Heaven, by numerous and undeniable miracles, and by his resurrection from the dead. He was without sin in his nature; he committed no sin in his life; he obeyed all the precepts of the law without failure; he endured the penalty which the law denounces against transgressors; that so what the law could not do, namely, justify us, because we are sinners, God has done another way; that is, by condemning and punishing sin, in the person of his Son; making him a sin offering for us, that we might be treated and accepted as righteous in his sight, the righteousness of Christ being put to our account, as our sins had been put to his account. These are the principal facts recorded in the New Testament.

2. Let us next notice the Testimony of God concerning these facts, with the promise of eternal life to all believers. We are to receive these facts and the doctrines connected with them, not as the traditions of men, or public rumors, but on the authority of God, who requires our belief of them. He has commanded this Gospel to be preached to all the world, accompanied with this solemn sanction:—“He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Mark xvi. 16. He has commanded that Repentance and Remission of Sins shall be universally preached; together with an assurance that whosoever believeth on Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life; that his blood cleanseth from all sin; and that believers having passed from death

unto life, shall never come into condemnation.

The Gospel also abounds with gracious invitations to the guilty and unworthy, requiring sinners to come to Christ and receive mercy and peace, "without money and without price;"—that is, without any meritorious qualification; and lest any should be discouraged by a sense of their guilt and vileness, he has made this most generous declaration:—"him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out:" Yea, he has added his authority to his invitation, saying, by St. John, "This is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son, Jesus Christ." Surely then it can be no presumption, even in the most guilty sinner, to "come to Christ that he may have life."

3. Here then comes in the Credence before mentioned—a simple and sincere belief of the Testimony that God has given of his Son, and a reliance on the promises made respecting salvation by him. When God sets before us his dear Son, and with him salvation, we must either believe or disbelieve what he says. Thus the apostle John states the matter in his First Epistle, chapter the fifth:—"There are three who bear record (or testimony) in Heaven.—The Father, The Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these Three are One;" and the testimony in which they unite is this:—God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Eternal life is a free gift, not a purchase, not the reward of human merit, and this life is procured by the death of his Son, and treasured up in him, for all who by faith apply for it. This all real Christians do: but all others, who, rejecting this testimony, expect life in another way, treat the God of truth as if he were a liar, ver. 10; which is the greatest and most destructive sin that a mortal can commit.

This belief of the truth includes, of course, a rejection of every other plan of salvation as false, dishonorable to God, and ruinous to man; while the believer thus "comes to Christ," "receives Christ, trusts in Christ,"—all which expressions are descriptive of true faith. Thus God is honored by taking him at his word; thus Abraham the father of the faithful, trusting to God's faithful word, and disregarding all the seeming difficulties of its accomplishment, was "strong in faith, giving glory to God." In like manner, Sarah, the wife of Abraham, "judged him faithful who had promised;"—and this is all that faith can do.

4. Let us, in the last place, contemplate

the happy effect of thus believing. Elizabeth pronounced Mary "blessed," because she believed the promise and because the promise would certainly be fulfilled; and thus we may, without hesitation, pronounce every believer to be a happy person. The first question we ask, when good tidings reach us of some great event which nearly concerns us is, Are they true? And if their truth be established, we naturally rejoice. The tidings of safety when in danger,—of peace when at war,—of wealth to the indigent,—of health to the sick,—of pardon to the criminal, fill the mind with pleasure and delight; so if the good message and gracious promise of God in the Gospel be fully credited, "joy and peace in believing," will be the happy result.

And the practical effect will be happy too, for it is a certain truth that faith worketh by love. It is possible indeed that bad men may abuse good doctrines, and turn the grace of God into licentiousness; but we dare appeal to the history of the church in all ages, not excepting the present, that this "grace of God," for which we plead, "teacheth true believers that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world," and thus to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. Yes; he that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself from the pollutions of the flesh and of the world. So Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, those ancient believers, embraced the Gospel promise, and were not ashamed to confess themselves pilgrims and strangers upon earth: and so St. Paul, the great champion of these truths, declared, that by faith in the cross of Jesus he was crucified to the world, and the world was crucified to him.

CONCLUSION.

WHAT has been said may account for the fear and dejection of many serious persons. The life of faith, in looking at unseen things, and trusting in an unseen Savior, is so remote from our ordinary affairs, that it is difficult to attain it. We are strongly inclined to depend upon our frames and feelings, and to derive our comfort from any thing rather than from the word of God. We have therefore great reason to be ashamed of our unbelief, and to cry earnestly to God, in the language of one of old, "Lord, we believe, help thou our unbelief!"

We may also learn, from what has been advanced, that the way to be truly happy is to rely with confidence on the word of God. If we honor God by trusting his word, he will honor us by granting the

light of his countenance. Let it, then, be the language of our hearts, "Remember the word unto thy servant, on which thou hast caused me to hope:" or as expressed in another place, "Do as thou hast said."—When is it that the Christian finds his mind relieved from the load of guilt? when does he experience peace, and hope, and love, and joy, but when he hears, or reads, or thinks on the love and grace, the blood, and righteousness, and intercession of the Divine Savior? It is this, probably, that renders the sacrament of the Lord's Supper so eminently useful, and so delightful to the believer; because then his eye is withdrawn from every object except Christ crucified, and his simple business is to receive him as therein exhibited.

Finally. This happiness is promoted by a well-grounded expectation of the promised blessings. Blessed art thou, believer, because there shall be a performance of all things told thee by the Lord. Did Abraham, after long waiting, receive the Son of promise? Was Israel delivered from Egypt and settled in Canaan, according to the word of God? Did Christ appear at the appointed time? did he suffer, and die, and rise, and ascend, according to the Scriptures? So be assured, Christian, that God will be faithful in fulfilling to thee all that he has promised; and, when you arrive in the heavenly Canaan, Joshua's appeal to Israel will be adopted, "Ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof."

HYMN.

O WHY should doubts and fears arise?
Why trickling sorrows drown our eyes?
Slowly, alas! our mind receives
The comfort that our Maker gives.

O for a strong and lasting faith,
To credit what the Almighty saith!
T' embrace the message of his Son,
And call the joys of heaven our own!

Then, should the earth's old pillars shake,
And all the wheels of nature break,
Our steady souls would fear no more
Than solid rocks when billows roar.

Our everlasting hopes arise
Above the ruinable skies,
Where th' eternal Builder reigns,
And his own courts his pow'r sustains.

WATTS.

PRAYER.—O God of our salvation, the God of all comfort, great is thy goodness to sinful man; for although he be born to trouble, and liable to various miseries in the present world, as well as to misery eternal in the world to come, yet art thou

pleased, of thy infinite mercy and goodness, to provide for his happiness here on earth. Glory be to thy name, that we have heard and known the joyful sound of the Gospel,—the glad tidings of great joy to all people,—that Jesus Christ is come into the world to save sinners!—and as the joy of thy salvation is received only by faith, O thou Author and Finisher of that precious grace, give unto us joy and peace in believing. Cordially crediting thy testimony concerning Jesus Christ, and the promises made to all who believe in him, may we trust and not be afraid; but relying upon thy divine faithfulness, may we fully expect that not one thing, of all the good things which thou hast spoken, shall fail: thus being strong in faith, and thus giving glory to God, may we be blessed, with the blessed mother of our Lord!—happily persuaded, like her, that there shall be a performance of thy holy word, and that thou wilt do as thou hast said.

SERMON XCIII.

THE DOCTRINE OF PROVIDENCE PRACTICALLY IMPROVED.

Luke xii. 7. But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

THE belief of a Divine Providence, exercised towards us in all places and circumstances, especially in times of great danger, is the best antidote possible against the fear of man; and it was for that purpose our blessed Lord spake these words to his disciples. In the fourth verse of this chapter it is written, "I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into Hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him;" and in a parallel passage, Matthew x. 16, after he had fully apprized them of the dangers to which they would be exposed when preaching his Gospel, he assures them that his good providence should watch over and defend them; that not only their more noble and vital parts should be regarded, but that the very hairs of their head being numbered, not one of them all should, without his permission, perish. By his strong expression, which was perhaps proverbial, the universality of God's providence is fully established;—and this is a subject to which we should often advert; for on our firm belief of it depend, in a great measure, our prayers, our praises and our consolation. The whole of practical religion stands connected with this doctrine, and from it we may learn many important and salutary lessons. My intention is,—

I. To prove that the Providence of God extends to all human affairs: and,

II. To point out the practical uses we should make of this doctrine.

I. Let us establish, by reference to the Scriptures this great and important truth,—that the Providence of God is universal; that it extends to all creatures and things throughout the whole world; but, as that concerns us most—especially to all human affairs.

By the Providence of God, we mean his preserving and governing all his creatures, and all their actions. He is in every place, beholding the evil and the good. All the heavenly bodies are sustained and directed by him. This earthly ball is his peculiar care. The seasons succeed each other in their appointed course; summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, are continued by his goodness. He makes the sun to shine, and the rain to descend, and the earth to bring forth abundantly to the service of man; yea, he openeth his hand, and supplieth the want of every living thing. In short, nothing is beyond nor beneath his notice.

1. This appears even from the light of nature; it seems necessarily to follow from his being the Creator of the world; for it is reasonable to believe, that he who made all things governs all things. “The invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead,” may be “understood by the things that are made; so as to leave, without excuse, the heathen themselves; who instead of glorifying him as God, worship the works of their own hands. (Rom. i. 18—20.) And we are told, Acts xiv. 17, that God did “not leave himself without witness,” even among those who have no Bible; because he, in his providence, “did them good, and gave them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness.”

The existence of God, a Being of infinite power, and wisdom and goodness, obliges us to believe that he will take care of his creatures. Not only men, but even brutes, are tenderly concerned for their young; and can we suppose that the Father of the Universe will neglect his offspring, or that he will forsake the work of his own hands? No; we must conclude, that, if he has all power, he *can*, and, if he has all goodness, he *will*, extend his kind regard to the whole creation.

2. But we have clearer light, and fuller proof of this from the Bible, God’s own revelation of himself. In that holy book, which we are sure was inspired by him, the Providence of God is everywhere asserted; and, indeed, a great part of the

Bible is a history of that Providence, as it has been exercised from the beginning of the world.

There we read that God is the great Preserver. “What shall I do unto thee,” said holy Job, “O thou preserver of men!” And the Psalmist exclaims, “How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. O Lord, thou preservest man and beast.” And in the book of Nehemiah, the good providence of God is celebrated in these exalted strains:—“Thou, even thou art Lord alone; thou hast made Heaven, the Heaven of heavens, with all their host; the earth and all things that are therein; the seas, and all that is therein; *and thou preservest them all!*”

The predictions of future events, and their fulfilment, of both which the Scriptures afford very numerous instances, furnish us with another proof of the reality of a Divine Providence; for if God do not govern the world, he could not foretell what would come to pass. God forewarned Noah of the flood 120 years before it came. He foretold the bondage of Israel in Egypt; how long it should last; and how they should be delivered. The captivity of Judah was foretold long before it happened; how many years it should continue; by whom, and by what means the people should be restored and the temple rebuilt. All the circumstances relating to the birth, life, sufferings, death and resurrection of Christ were exactly predicted; and so were the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dreadful miseries of the Jews;—all were so exactly foretold, that the predictions appear almost like a history of the events; and demonstrate, beyond all doubt, that God’s Providence extends to all things.

God, who *preserves* all creatures, *governs* them also. He does not commit the management of the world to deputies, as many of the Heathen supposed; for they thought he was too great a Being to trouble himself with the little affairs of mankind; but this notion was by no means honorable to Deity: they judged of the great God by great men; who, from their limited powers, find it impossible to manage many great concerns, and are therefore obliged to commit much to inferior officers; but the God with whom we have to do is everywhere present at one and the same time, and sees and knows all men, and all things; yea, even the secret thoughts of the heart; and being possessed of all wisdom, power, and goodness, can

with the utmost ease govern all his creatures and all their actions.

"The Lord reigneth." "He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again: he looseth the bond of kings, and girdeth their loins with a girdle. He leadeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty." (Job. xii. 18, &c.) He taught Jeremiah, that as easily as a potter altereth the form of a lump of clay, he can alter the state of a nation; either to pull down and destroy it, if wicked, or to build and plant, and cause it to prosper upon its repentance (Jerem. xviii. 1—10.) This lesson did the king of Babylon learn by painful experience: he was taught "that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will." Dan. iv. 25.

And if God thus govern the nations of the earth, he will surely exercise his special Providence in the *church*; for of that he says, "This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it." All things were made "by Christ and for Christ;" and the earth was formed chiefly to become the theatre on which the great affairs of human redemption were to be transacted; and when these are all accomplished, the earth itself shall be burnt up and demolished. Jesus Christ is "King in Sion," and "Head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who filleth all in all."

The Providence of God is to be owned in the affairs of *families*; it is he who *forms* them: "God setteth the solitary in families;" he setteth the poor on high after affliction (as he did Job) and maketh him families like a flock;" in other cases he reduceth them, and removes one after another of them to the grave, or "they are minished and brought low, through oppression, affliction and sorrow (Ps. 107.) In these changes let the hand of God be acknowledged.

Nor are *individuals* beneath his notice, as the text plainly imports; not even the least of their concerns, "for the hairs of their head are all numbered;" consequently all their more important concerns. Thus prayed pious Hannah, mother of the prophet Samuel,—“the Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich; he bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory; for the pillars of the earth are the

Lord's, and he hath set the word upon them." (1 Sam. ii. 6, &c.) Thus also spake God, by his servant Daniel, to the impious king Belshazzar:—"the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." Let us then remember our entire dependence on Divine Providence for life, and breath, and all things, and say with Job,—“Our days are determined; the number of our months is with him, and he has appointed his bounds, which we cannot pass.” Job, xiv. 5.

And as to good men, to believers in Jesus, we know that they are "the Temples of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." His Providence is so concerned about them and all their affairs, that "all their ways are ordered by the Lord:" he has promised to "guide them with his eye," and whatever may befall them, to "make all things work together for their good."

Even as to those events which we call *contingent* or *accidental*, even they are under the direction and control of the Almighty. What can seem to be more casual than a *lot*? but the lot itself falls according to the Divine appointment; so Solomon tells us, Prov. xvi. 33:—"The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." On this account, good men have had recourse to a lot when unable, by human prudence, to make a proper decision; and thus an apostle was chosen in the room of Judas:—and, by the way, this shows the impropriety of using the lot by way of amusement, as is done in cards and other games. An appeal to the decision of Providence, whether intended or not, is of too grave an import to be allowed in the pastimes of men. Great events often turn upon a very small pivot. A sudden thought in a man's heart, a single sentence from a man's lips, may lead to immense good, or to incalculable evil, as the history of the world abundantly shows.

This providence of God, the existence of which we have clearly proved, is *sovereign*,—*wise*,—*mysterious* and *good*.

It is sovereign and uncontrollable.—Who hath resisted, who can resist, his will? That will is accomplished among "the armies of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; none can stay his hand, none can prevent the execution of his purpose.

It is wise,—his work is perfect,—all his ways are judgment. He cannot err: He

cannot be deceived or mistaken; He is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works;—yet, sometimes

It is mysterious—"clouds and darkness are round about him;" his way is in the sea, and his footsteps in the waters;" we cannot trace his path; his proceedings may sometimes puzzle and perplex us. The righteous are afflicted, oppressed, persecuted; while the wicked prosper, flourish, and have more than heart can wish. We may not be able to account for these things; but we are sure that his Providence is

Always good. "Truly, God is good to Israel." "His eyes," directing all human affairs, "run to and fro throughout the earth;" and for what purpose? "To show himself strong" in behalf of all that fear and love his name. Yes, assuredly; for "all things work together for the good" of his people.

II. We now proceed to the second part of the subject; namely, To point out the practical uses we ought to make of the doctrine of Providence.

This doctrine is, in truth, connected with the whole of Practical Religion. Take away Providence, and you destroy the whole system of godliness, and leave no room for prayer nor praise. Persons, therefore, should be well established in the belief of this truth, and be able to say with the Psalmist, "Verily, there is a reward for the righteous: verily, he is a God that judgeth (or governeth) in the earth." Ps. lvi. 11.—Persuaded, then, of this truth,

1. Let us stand in awe of the great Ruler of the world. Do his eyes behold? his eye-lids try the children of men? Is he in every place, beholding the evil and the good? In his hand is our breath and all our ways? Who, then, shall not fear him? who shall not tremble at his presence? Is the wrath of a king like the roaring of a lion?—surely, then, the King of kings is above all to be feared. Do many seek the Ruler's favor? and shall not we esteem his favor the greatest of all benefits, and his loving kindness to be better than life? Yes, let us seek him with our whole heart, and be at peace with him, through faith in Jesus Christ; then we may be sure that our heavenly Father, who doth his own holy will among the armies of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, will so order all our concerns, that they shall promote his glory and our eternal welfare.

2. Let us rejoice that the reins of universal government are in the hands of Je-

sus Christ, our Savior and our Lord; of him who is our Mediator, our Redeemer, our Brother, and our Friend.

When his coming into the world was, long before that period, predicted, the Prophet (Ps. xcvi. 11.) calls upon "the heavens, the earth, the sea, the fields, the woods, to rejoice and be glad," for, saith he, "He cometh! he cometh to judge (that is, to govern) the earth; he shall govern the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." This hath been accomplished. He came, he taught, he died, he rose, he ascended into Heaven, and took his seat at the right hand of God;

"And now he lives, and now he reigns,
And sees the fruit of all his pains."

"All power (saith he) is given to me in heaven and in earth;" and all this power is exercised for the good of the Church. "All things are yours—Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas, and the world, and life, and death, and things present and things to come: all are yours; and yours because ye belong to Christ," who is "Head over all things to the Church, which Church is his body,—the fullness of him that filleth all in all." Surely, then, the Christian ought to rejoice "that the Lord reigneth."

3. The doctrine of Providence shows the propriety and utility of Prayer; it affords the strongest motive, and the best encouragement to that duty. Were there no Providence, who would pray? or to what purpose would any one pray? Nor does the appointment of God render prayer needless or useless, as some have pretended. If all things are previously appointed of God, say they, of what use is prayer? We answer, That He who has appointed the end, has also appointed the means, of which prayer is the chief. So David wisely argued, when he prayed thus (2 Sam. vii, 27:) "O Lord of Hosts, thou hast revealed unto thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house;"—he then adds, "*therefore* hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee." Let us imitate his example and turn the promises of God into prayers: such prayers will surely speed. He who says in our text, "The very hairs of your head are all numbered," himself directs us to say, "Give us this day our daily bread;" and, for our encouragement in offering this and other petitions, we are reminded, in the close of the prayer, that the kingdom of Providence belongs to him;—"for"—"thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory;"—thine, O Lord, the kingdom of universal nature, providence and grace;

—thine the fullness of almighty power;—thine the glory of infinite perfection; and to thee be the praise of all ascribed for ever and ever. Amen.

4. The doctrine of Providence shows the propriety of offering to God the sacrifice of Praise and Thanksgiving. Does "every good and every perfect gift come down from above,—from the Father of Lights?" Surely, then, the sacrifice of praise is a reasonable service. "What shall I render to God for all his benefits?" is a reasonable inquiry; and "O, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! and let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing."

5. It shows the propriety of submission to the will of God. Does the Lord rule? Submit to his government. "He is righteous in all his ways! holy in all his works." He cannot err. He doth all things well. What, if severe afflictions befall thee? say, as Aaron, when both his sons were cut off for their transgression; "It is the Lord! let him do what seemeth good in his sight!"—and as David, when, in the depth of his affliction, Shimei basely cursed him; "Let him curse; it may be, the Lord hath bidden him curse!"—and as Job, when bereft of his property and his family: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!" Yea, say with our holy Redeemer, when enduring the unspeakable agonies of the garden: "The cup which my Father giveth me to drink, shall I not drink of it?" We are ignorant and short-sighted creatures; we cannot understand nor comprehend the plan nor the reasons of the Divine Government. Solomon says, "No man can find out the work that God makes, from the beginning to the end." Eccles. iii. 11.—It is but a small part of his work of Providence that we behold; not the beginning, nor the end: let us, therefore, "judge nothing before the time;" but believe assuredly that "he doth all things well;" and that "what we know not now, we shall know hereafter."

Improve the doctrine of Divine Providence, as a remedy against Anxiety. Thus, our Lord improves it when he cautions his disciples against anxious cares about futurity: "Behold the fowls of the air, and behold the lilies of the field;" Providence provides for the support of the former, and clothes the latter with splendid beauty; why should *you* care, who are far superior to them! and especially when you recollect, that the God of Providence is your

Father; that he well knows your necessities; and that, if you seek him and his kingdom, all these things shall be given you in addition. Hath he not said, "The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing?"—and again, "There is no want to them that fear him?" Ps. xxxiv. 9. 10.—Yes: let the pious poor especially, remember this for their comfort, That "Godliness is profitable unto all things; having a promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come!" 1 Tim. iv. 8.

7. Finally. Let this subject lead our minds forward towards the future and eternal world. In the conduct of Divine Providence, we meet with many mysterious events. The wicked greatly prosper,—while the righteous are deeply afflicted. Useful men are often cut off in their youth; while many noxious sinners grow old in rebellion. The pious are persecuted, and their oppressors flourish. Be it so: and let it appear to be mysterious: yet, this is no impeachment of the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God. The wicked prosper; but it is only as the beasts in a good pasture, fattening for slaughter. The righteous suffer; but it is only the discipline of that school, in which they are training up for glory. Heaven will explain all, and make amends for all; and then shall the whole Church of God, redeemed and glorified, with one accord exclaim—"He hath done all things well!"

HYMN.

God, moves in a mysterious way,
His wonders to perform;
He plants his footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs
And works his sov'reign will.

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take,
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face!

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind Unbelief is sure to err,
And scan his work in vain;
God is his own interpreter;
And he will make it plain.

COWPER.

PRAYER.—O thou Preserver of men, we believe that thou art the righteous Governor of the world, and that thou art in every place, beholding the evil and the good! We believe that thou art the Ruler among the nations, and dost govern the churches of thy saints; art present in the families of thy people, and dost notice the humblest individuals. Thy providence, which is absolutely sovereign, and sometimes mysterious, is always wise and good. We desire to stand in awe of thee, and seek thy favor in Jesus with our whole heart;—we rejoice that the reins of universal government are in the hands of God our Savior; therefore, O Lord of Hosts, thy servants have found in their hearts to pray this prayer unto thee. To thee, as the God of providence, we offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving, for hitherto thou hast helped us. To thee, O sovereign Disposer of human affairs, we desire at all times to submit, and to cast all our cares upon thee, humbly believing that thou carest for us; and however dark and mysterious some of thy proceedings may appear, we hope for the season which shall clear up all, and prove, to thy glory and our joy, that thou hast done all things well. To thee, O Lord, be the glory of Creation, Providence, and Grace, through Jesus Christ our Savior! Amen.

SERMON XCIV.

WISDOM, RIGHTEOUSNESS, SANCTIFICATION AND REDEMPTION DERIVED FROM CHRIST.

1 Cor. i. 30. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us Wisdom,—and Righteousness,—and Sanctification,—and Redemption.

THIS is one of the most comprehensive texts in the Bible. It is a short, but full inventory of the invaluable blessings of the Gospel; enough to make a poor sinner rich, and a miserable sinner happy. Yes; thrice happy is the man who possesses these!—O! that they may be ours!

To Corinth, that great, populous, and wicked city, the Lord directed the steps of his faithful servant Paul, about the year 51. After being, in a great measure, rejected at Athens, he repaired to Corinth, where he found Aquila and Priscilla; wrought with them at their trade of tent-making; and preached in the synagogue; but it was “in weakness, fear, and much trembling,” on account of the unbelief of the Jews, who “opposed themselves, and blasphemed;” but his Divine Master graciously appeared to him, and encouraged him to proceed, assuring him of safety and success. Thus strengthened, he continued there, and preached nearly two years; and he found that the Lord had, as he said, “much people in that city.”

The inhabitants of Corinth were great admirers of human eloquence; but Paul

did not study to gratify them in their taste; his constant subject was “Christ crucified;” and his manner of treating it was purposely plain: and, although such preaching was, by some, accounted “foolishness,” its success, in the conversion of many, proved that it was “the wisdom of God, and the power of God;” and thus it was that the whole glory of salvation was secured to him: no flesh could have any pretence to glory in his presence; but all the blessings conveyed through this Gospel to believers were from God, through Christ, even 1. True Wisdom; 2. Perfect Righteousness; 3. Gospel Sanctification; and, 4. The final Redemption of the body at the last day.

Let us speak of each of these briefly; and,

1. Of WISDOM.

Wisdom is the power of judging rightly. It is more, and better than knowledge; for it is the application of knowledge to practical purposes. Wisdom chooses the best objects, and then pursues the best means of obtaining them. A wise man disregards trifles, and sets before him something that is truly great and good; he then considers by what means he may be able to make that object his own. With regard to the present world he judges health to be an invaluable blessing; he studies how to preserve, or to regain it. His worldly business, from which he derives his support, he keeps it constantly in view, and studies daily how to promote it. If he has a family, he considers its maintenance, education, and peace, as great and important objects, and he labors uniformly to attain them. In all these things, and in a thousand more, “wisdom is profitable to direct; and as Solomon says, “a wise man’s eyes are in his head;” (Eccl. ii. 14.) that is, ready to discover the dangers that should be avoided, and the advantages that should be improved.

ALL wisdom is from God; all the natural powers of perception and instinct in inferior creatures and especially all the superior powers of reason and judgment in men. It is he “who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven.” And we see that these natural powers are capable of vast improvement by education and learning; and some men have become prodigies of science and wisdom.

But there is a peculiar kind of wisdom, far superior to every other, suited to man in his relation to God, and to his eternal destinies in a future state. This wisdom may be summed up in a word; it is RE-

LIGION. We are fully warranted in asserting this, for God himself declares it (Job xxviii. 28.) "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding;" and this St. Paul also terms being "wise unto salvation."

* This is "the wisdom that is from above,"—Christ is "made unto us wisdom." He is the original source and fountain of wisdom. He is "Wisdom" itself (Prov. viii. ;) and "in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. ii. 3. ;) so that, whatever true wisdom is found in the world, it is derived from him, even as the natural sun is the source of all the light of this world. Jesus is "the Sun of Righteousness,"—"a light to enlighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of Israel."

Accordingly, we find him, by his personal ministry, diffusing wonderful light throughout Judea and Galilee; declaring the nature and perfections of God his Father,—explaining the spirituality and extent of his holy law,—exposing the hidden depravity of the human heart,—exhibiting the spiritual nature of his kingdom,—and expressing the grand design of his coming,—“to seek and save the lost,” and to “lay down his life as a ransom” for captive sinners.

And when he ascended into heaven, he committed this work to the Holy Spirit, who, as “the Spirit of Christ,” has ever since continued with the Church as its great and effectual teacher. What marvellous works were effected on the day of Pentecost! and how numerous were the early converts to Christianity! And from that period until now, he has resided on earth, accompanying the word of the Gospel with Divine energy. “The natural man,” that is, every man by nature, “knoweth not the things of the Spirit of God;” but, by His gracious help, “they are spiritually discerned,” and believers learn “the mind of Christ.”

This is the *true wisdom*. Other kinds of wisdom have their value: they may be necessary to the comfort of human life; they may entertain and elevate the possessor; they may obtain wealth and fame: yet, after all, what do they avail? “I have spent my life,” said a great scholar on his dying bed, “I have spent my life in *laborious trifling*!”—and trifles indeed, trifles light as air, will all our pursuits prove, if “the one thing needful” be forgotten, or if “the great salvation” be neglected. Compared with heavenly wisdom, all literary attainments will be as a grain of sand to a mountain, or a drop of water to the ocean. If any man, then, desire this spir-

itual wisdom, let him ask it of the only wise God our Saviour, and let him search for it daily, as for hidden treasure, in the Bible,—God’s holy book of true and heavenly wisdom.

II. *Jesus Christ is made unto us* RIGHTEOUSNESS.

By righteousness, we understand perfect conformity to the will of God, as expressed in the law of the Ten commandments. The word signifies *that which is full weight or measure*, the standard being that holy law. That law requires perfect and supreme love to God, without any failure, in thought, word, or deed. And is there any man thus righteous? No; there is not a just man upon earth; that is, one who doeth good, and sinneth not.

Yet, without a perfect righteousness, no man can be justified;—for to be *justified*, is to be declared righteous; and can the God of truth declare a man righteous, when he is unrighteous; that is, when he is a sinner? The fact is, “all have sinned,” whether Gentiles or Jews: the former against the law of Nature; the latter against the revealed law of God. “Every mouth” (that would plead excuse or merit) “must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.” It follows, then, by necessary consequence, that “by the deeds of the law,” or what men usually call good works, “no flesh can be justified in his sight.” So the apostle Paul concludes in the second and third chapters of his epistle to the Romans.

But must we, then, despair? Yes; of making ourselves righteous; but not of becoming righteous by other means; for, according to our text, “Christ is made unto us Righteousness.” It is the principal design of the Gospel to publish and proclaim the Righteousness of Christ; that is, the perfect obedience of Christ unto death, as the sole ground of our acceptance with God; which Righteousness being imputed to the believer, (Rom. iv. 24.) he is accounted and declared to be righteous; so that, having “passed from death unto life,” “there is no longer any condemnation unto him;” for, “the law of the Spirit of life” (that is, the Gospel) “hath made him free from the law of sin and death.” Thus David, in ancient times, described the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered: blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” Rom. iv. 6, 7.

But, do any object to this doctrine, and

suppose that if our own goodness or works do not form the righteousness by which we are to be justified, we may therefore become careless about good works, and so make Christ "the minister of sin,"—let them attend to the third head of our discourse, which is to show that,

III. *Jesus Christ is made unto us* SANC-TIFICATION.

By Sanctification, we mean the renewing of our nature in the image of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and through the mediation of Christ.

Sanctification differs from Justification. Justification respects the *state* of man; Sanctification respects his nature, his disposition, his conduct. A man may be tried at a human bar for his life, and he may be acquitted and discharged; but if he have, at the same time, a mortal disease upon him, he will die. The province of a Judge and of a Physician are very different. Justification is the act of God as a Judge; Sanctification is the work of God the Spirit, as the great Physician of souls; and we find both these works united in Psalm ciii. 3,—“Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.” The sinner is charged with a breach of God’s holy law; but when he is enabled to believe, the righteousness of Christ is imputed to him, and he is therefore acquitted and discharged; there is no longer any condemnation to him: but it is equally necessary that he be renewed and sanctified: for it is written, “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”

We must be very careful to distinguish between Justification and Sanctification; without which, much confusion, and some dangerous mistakes, may ensue. We may, therefore, notice another difference:—Justification is perfect in this life:—not so our Sanctification. When the perfect righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, we are at once perfectly justified; but Sanctification is a gradual work, and the remains of corruption are found even in the best of men. It is also to be observed, that our sanctification forms no part of our title to Heaven; that title is founded only on the righteousness of Christ, by which we are justified; but in Sanctification consists our *meetness* for Heaven; and without it we should not be qualified to enjoy the pure pleasures, or engage in the sacred employments of that holy place.

Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit; it is begun by his power in our Regeneration, whereby we become “new creatures;” “old things being done away, and all things becoming new.”

By nature we are blind and foolish; by grace we are enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, and become wise to salvation. By nature the will is perverse and rebellious, opposed to the will of God, and enmity against him: by grace this rebellious disposition is subdued, and the believer cries, with converted Saul, “Lord! What wilt thou have me to do?” By nature the affections of the soul are corrupted, and wholly carnal; fixed on worldly, fleshly, and sinful objects; but by grace they become spiritual; they are fixed on God and Christ; on holy and heavenly things; all which is evidenced in its truth and power, by the correct, moral, holy, blameless, and useful conduct of the believer: the whole of this is summed up by St. Paul, in his prayer for the Thessalonians, 1 Ep. v. 23, “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Our text informs us how we may obtain this great benefit,—the sanctification of our souls. We are told that Christ is made unto us sanctification; and let us now consider how he is made such unto us.

1. He is made unto us Sanctification, because he first relieves us, by his atoning sacrifice, from the guilt and defilement of sin, which must be taken away before we can be inwardly purified. “He washes us from our sins in his own blood;” and thus our Justification precedes our Sanctification.

2. It is by virtue of the *intercession* of Christ that we are sanctified. As it was the especial design of Christ, in dying for us, that he might “purify us to himself, and make us a peculiar people, zealous of good works,” so he ever lives, by his intercession, to effect this. A delightful specimen of this is given us in the prayer which he offered for his apostles, (John, xvii. 9, 17,) “Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth: I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that they may be kept from the evil;” and were it not for the powerful intercession of our great Advocate, our enemies would prevail, and sin would have dominion over us. Jesus prays, and therefore it is that our faith faileth not.

3. It is by the *Word of Christ* that we are sanctified. The doctrines, the precepts, the examples, the promises, and the threatenings of God’s word, are the principal means of our sanctification. It is the Gospel chiefly, not the law, which is the instrument of purifying the soul. The law

is the rule of obedience, in connexion with the New Testament, in which that original rule is amplified and its spirituality displayed; but the law alone will not make any man holy.

"The law discovers guilt and sin,
And shows how vile our hearts have been;
Only the Gospel can express
Forgiving love, and cleansing grace."

And thus it was that the apostle Paul "died to the law, that he might live unto God."

4. It is by virtue of Union to Christ that we are sanctified. Christ is the head of the Church; his people are the members of his body, and it is by their union with him that they receive strength and grace for every duty. "Out of his fullness," said the beloved disciple, "have we received, and grace for grace;"—grace in the believer, corresponding with the grace that was in him, our great example: and, thus also he teaches us to "abide in him, as the branches in the vine," for, separate from him, we can do nothing; but, united to him, each believer may say, as did St. Paul,—"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

5. Christ is made unto us Sanctification, as he is the only perfect pattern of holiness. Example is allowed to be the most effectual mode of instruction, and far more prevalent than precept alone. There is something powerfully persuasive in a good example; something that secretly prompts us to imitation. Now Jesus Christ was appointed for this purpose. Angels would not have been perfect patterns, especially in that branch of Sanctification which relates to the patient endurance of afflictions; but Jesus Christ is the perfect pattern, both of a cheerful activity, and of patient suffering; and he has "left us an example, that we should follow his steps." In our Christian course, therefore, let us be constantly "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith: who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." It is thus that "the world is crucified unto us, and we are crucified to the world;" it is thus that "we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory."

6. To all these considerations we may add, "the love of Christ;"—which is, of all motives to holiness, the strongest and most effectual. It was this that animated the minds of the apostles to the utmost energy of action: it was that which fortified the hearts of the first Christians against all the terrors of persecution, and

rendered them joyful and triumphant, even in the flames of martyrdom; for the love of Christ constrained them.

Would we then be holy? the way of holiness is plainly marked. We cannot obtain sanctification merely by dint of our own endeavors, though these are to be diligently employed; but by looking at Jesus, and by being united to him, deriving constant virtue from him; that, according to the prophet, each of us may say, "Surely, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength."

Thus we see how Christ is made unto us Sanctification; he is made this *to us*; from him we derive it; but it is not so *in him*, that it is not also *in us*. Some deny that holiness is a *personal* thing, and affirm that we have no holiness but in Christ. This is a great and dangerous mistake.

Holiness consists in a conformity to Christ; it is the renovation of our nature in the image of God. It is "dying to sin and living to righteousness." It includes the "mortification of sin" in our members. It includes "the fruits of the Spirit; as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," Gal. v. 22. These are personal things; they are wrought in the hearts of believers, and produced in their tempers and lives. It is absurd to say they are in Christ, and imputed to us:—they are the effects of the Holy Spirit imparted to us, whose operations are compared by Christ himself to "a well of water within us, springing up unto everlasting life."

IV. It now remains that, in the last place, we show that *Jesus Christ is made unto us* REDEMPTION.

The Redemption here intended is not, I conceive, that of the Soul, but that of the Body. If Christ be made unto us Wisdom, we are delivered from the powers of darkness. If he be made unto us Righteousness, we are redeemed from the curse of the law; and if he be made unto us Sanctification, we are delivered from the dominion of sin. In these things consists the redemption of the *soul*. But the "Redemption of the body" seems to be intended; and this agrees with a passage in Rom. viii. 19, &c. where the apostle says, "The creature itself;" that is, the human body of the believer; "shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption;" namely, by the Resurrection at the great day; then shall the whole man, body and soul, enjoy "the glorious liberty of the children of God;" and for this, he observes, that redeemed believers, now burthened with pains and sorrows, wait, earnestly longing

for "the adoption;" that is, for the full "manifestation of the sons of God," when they shall be transformed, even in body, unto his glorious likeness;—and this he calls "the Redemption of the body."

CONCLUSION.

HERE then we see in what real religion (true Christianity) consists. Here are all the blessings necessary to our eternal salvation. Without these, without *all* these, we perish. With these, we are safe and happy for ever.

Do *we* perceive the need of *wisdom*, that we may be wise to salvation!—of *Righteousness*, that we may be justified!—of *Sanctification*, that we may be holy in heart and life! And if we do see the need of all these things, do we know the only source from whence they can be derived? Remember that Christ is made all these unto us. He makes us wise: he constitutes us righteous; He makes us holy by the grace of his Holy Spirit. Let us then seek all these from him by prayer; let us receive all these from him by faith. Then may we also expect the crowning blessing,—the redemption of the body. Our souls being admitted to glory immediately after death, our bodies shall rest in their graves till the resurrection; and then, O joyful and blessed day! both body and soul shall be made completely happy in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity!

Finally. Let us take care to give to God all the glory due unto him for these great and inestimable blessings. This is the principal design of the whole passage before us, as it is expressed in the verse after our text:—"That he who glorieth, may glory in the Lord." Not in himself; as man, proud man is prone to do; but, as all these are the free gifts of God, bestowed upon the unworthy, let him say, "Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me; but to thy name be glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake." Amen.

PRAYER.—ALMIGHTY GOD, we humbly confess before thee, that, as fallen and corrupt creatures, we are destitute of true wisdom, and are totally unrighteous and unholy; but, glory be to thy great name, that Jesus Christ is made to every believer wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification. Blessed God, make us, we beseech thee, wise unto salvation. Impute to us the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ, the righteous one; and purify our hearts by the Holy Spirit, that we may be sanctified wholly, in body, soul, and spirit. May we be conformed to the image of the holy Savior, that the mind which was in him may be also in us, and that we may walk even as he walked!—and as these bodies of sin are doomed to the grave, and must see corruption, grant us, O God, a share in the first resurrection, that even

these vile bodies may, in the day of redemption, be made like unto the glorious body of the Son of God, according to the mighty working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself. To the gracious Redeemer, to the Father of mercies, and to the Spirit of holiness,—the Three-One God of our salvation, be everlasting praises! Amen.

SERMON XCV.

SAMSON'S RIDDLE.

Judges xiv. 14. Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness.

THESE words are a kind of parable, or riddle, proposed by Samson to his companions, soon after his marriage with a Philistine woman. Samson was a great conqueror of the Philistines, the adversaries of Israel, and yet is himself conquered by one of their women. It was well said to him by his father Manoah, "Is there never a woman among the daughters of thy brethren, or among all my people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?" But his affection got the better of his judgment, and induced him to violate the laws of his God. While he was travelling along the road to pay her a visit, he was attacked by a furious lion; but, strengthened by supernatural power, he overcame and slew his ferocious enemy.

Sometime after this event, returning by the same way, he stepped aside, as it was natural for him to do, to inspect the carcass of the lion, which still lay by the road side; when, to his great astonishment, it had become a bee-hive; having been dried, probably by the great heat of the sun, the bees, which abounded in that country, had formed their combs in it, and it was filled with honey. Being hungry, he took of the honey, ate it, and proceeded on his journey. After his marriage, for the entertainment of the company, he put forth this riddle. They had not ingenuity enough to discover it, but had recourse to an unfair stratagem; which led to very serious consequences; yet, was it overruled, by the providence of God, for the destruction of many of Israel's enemies by the hand of Samson, who was raised up to be a scourge to the Philistines.

By the help of Samson's wife, who, by dint of tears and entreaties, extorted the solution of the riddle from him, they said, "What is sweeter than honey? and what is stronger than a lion?"

It was not in this instance only that advantage has been found where it was least expected; for, in the course of God's wise and good providence, and in the experience

of his people, it has often occurred that food and sweetness,—great spiritual advantages, have been derived from events which were threatening and forbidding in themselves, and as little likely to do them good as the carcass of a dead lion was to furnish sweet food for a hungry traveller.

It is in this view I shall consider the text; intending to illustrate the following observation:—

By the goodness of God, those things which once appeared unpleasant or injurious, become real blessings.

1. This general observation may be applied to those painful convictions and apprehensions which sometimes harass the minds of beginners in religion.

It is absolutely necessary, in order to our obtaining pardon and eternal life, that we should know and feel that we are sinners; without this, there can be no “repentance towards God, or faith in our Lord Jesus Christ;” for “the whole need not the physician, but they who are sick;” and Jesus came, “not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”—But necessary as this conviction is, and the humiliation of soul that follows it, the enemy of mankind frequently takes occasion to disturb and distract the mind, and to suggest the improbability, or even the impossibility of obtaining mercy. Once, sin seemed such a trifle as not to be worth regarding; now, it appears to be so enormous that it cannot be forgiven.

Yet are these seasons of distress overruled for good. They who sow in tears shall reap in joy; and they who go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless return again with joy, bringing their sheaves with them.” The first Christian converts, who in the bitterness of conviction said to the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” soon “received the word gladly, and did eat their meat with gladness, praising God, and having favor with all the people.” Many who have felt the deepest sorrows for sin, have, afterwards, possessed the greatest degree of religious joy, and have “loved much, because they knew that much was forgiven.” Thus then, “out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness.”

2. The same may be said of divers temptations with which a Christian may be exercised. The tempter is compared to “a roaring lion, who walketh about, seeking whom he may devour;” his aim is to destroy, by leading into sin, and keeping men in ignorance and unbelief. “Simon, Simon,” said our Lord to Peter, “Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat;”—and indeed he did

sift him. Peter boasted, was tempted, and fell. But the prayers of his great Advocate prevailed; he rose again, and became, by the temptation, more diffident and watchful than before; and being reconverted, he strengthened his brethren, as Christ had directed. When afterwards asked by his Master, “Lovest thou me more than these?” that is, more than these thy fellow-disciples, as once thou boastedst,—he modestly replied, “Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee;” but he would make no comparisons. His sermons and epistles breathe an excellent and an humble spirit, and show how much he profited by the temptation; and thus it is that believers in general learn to “watch and pray, lest they enter into temptation;” and while they “think they stand,” are cautious lest they fall. Thus, “out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong sweetness.”

We may apply this observation to various other trials to which the people of God are liable: To,

3. **POVERTY**, for instance. It is the lot of many, of very many good people, to be poor. “Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world?” “Ye see your calling, brethren, not many wise, mighty, noble; but God hath chosen the foolish, the weak, the base.” Poverty is, in itself, a great and sore evil. The scanty supply which the laborious poor obtain, with all their sweat and toil, is the sad effect of sin, for God “cursed the earth for man’s sake; thorns and thistles (said he) shall it bring forth to thee; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground:—in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.” Gen. iii. 17.

The Great God who wisely governs the world, and dearly loves all his children, is pleased to withhold from many of them those blessings and comforts, which they cannot but earnestly desire; yet, even here, they gather honey from the carcass of the lion: for their various troubles give occasion for the exercise of humble resignation to the sovereign will of God. They learn from their afflicted Savior to say, “Not my will, but thine be done.” The cup is bitter: but it is he who puts it into my hand, and shall I not drink it? Shall I “receive good at the hand of the Lord, and not evil also?” The Christian looks round him, and beholds the wicked prospering; “their eyes stand out with fatness,” and they have more than the heart can wish; but he does not envy them; he knows that they are rather objects of pity. His murmurings, if they arise, are re-

pressed ; he submits to the holy appointment of God ; and looks for his good things in a better world.

Constant dependence upon God is hereby promoted. He who taught his disciples to pray,—“Give us day by day our daily bread,” seemed by that petition to intimate that they would, generally, possess no store for the morrow, but be daily dependent on him for their needful supplies. Indeed, the rich as well as the poor depend upon the constant bounty of Heaven ; but the former are not so sensible of it as the latter ; these are, what God said he would leave in the midst of Israel,—“A poor and an afflicted people, who should trust in the name of the Lord.”

Thankfulness is another fruit of sanctified affliction ; for such is the forgetfulness and ingratitude of our hearts ; that we are scarcely sensible of the value of our mercies but by the loss or suspension of them ; and it is probable that many a poor cottager is more thankful to God for his mean habitation and slender fare, than the possessor of the castle or the palace for his splendid abundance. Too often the rich and prosperous become proud, and forget God ; but the truly pious will try to render unto him the praises due to his name.

Another advantage which may be gained from poverty is, That the Christian is led to seek the things that are above. “Men of the world have their portion in this life ;” they are “carnally minded,” and if the lusts of the flesh and of the mind can but be gratified, they care not for a future inheritance. But the children of God would dread this state of man as the greatest evil, and would far rather be the poor Lazarus at the gate, than the ungodly worldling in Hell ; “for they have respect to the recompense of the reward.” Thus then the pious poor may be said to obtain honey from the carcass of the lion.

4. Apply this sentiment to the person who is grievously afflicted with severe pains and bodily afflictions. We all love ease, and would gladly avoid pain ; but our heavenly Father sees it needful to chastise us ; and frequently, by exercising us with irksome and painful disorders. All this is wearisome to nature, for no visitation of this kind is “for the present joyous, but grievous ; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto those who are exercised thereby.” If sin, the root of all suffering, be embittered ; if tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope ; if under the pressure of

personal affliction, our hidden corruptions are detected ; if, like Israel, by their forty years’ trial, we learn what is in our heart ; if strict and impartial examination be pursued, and our forgotten sins be brought to remembrance ; and, finally, if holy resolutions be formed, and we cry, as it is meet we should, “We have borne chastisement ; we will not offend any more,”—then is the purpose of divine and paternal goodness in the visitation accomplished ; then may the Christian say, “It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes : before I was afflicted I went astray ; but now I have kept thy word.” Ps. cxix. 67 and 71.

5. Domestic trials may produce the same advantages. It is in our own houses, and with our own families, that we expect the most pure and permanent pleasures ; and, while these are enjoyed, we cannot be sufficiently thankful. But we are not to expect unmingled or uninterrupted delights. Husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, are sweet and tender names, and they are the sources of much innocent enjoyment ; but they may become in the course of God’s most holy and sovereign providence, the occasions of bitter grief and sorrow. If they are unfaithful, undutiful, unkind ; if they are perverse, and wicked, and abandoned, how deep is the misery they excite ! or, if they be kind, pious, and useful, how do we share their pains and troubles, if they are afflicted ; and if, as it must frequently happen, that relentless Death enter our houses, and snatch from our embrace the partners of our lives, or our dear and tender offspring, taking away the delight of our eyes with a stroke, and hiding from us in the dust, those who were dear to us as our own souls,—how bitter is the anguish !—“’t is the survivor dies !”

But is there no consolation in such cases ? God never leaves his people destitute of comfort, or at least of sufficient sources of comfort. Not only should we submissively say, “It is the Lord ; let him do as seemeth good in his sight,” but we may find honey in the carcass of the lion, and extract the most essential benefits from these severe exercises. See here ;—in this loss, in that disappointment, in the other heavy cross, see and learn the vanity of creature comforts. You had often read, and heard, and professed to believe, that “all is vanity and vexation of spirit ;” and here you find it is so. You leaned upon this reed, and it is broken ; you took shelter under this gourd, and it is withered. Cease, then, from man,

"whose breath is in his nostrils, for what is he to be accounted of?" Remember likewise, "the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it; for the fashion of this world passeth away." 1 Cor. vii. 29—31.

6. The same may be said with regard to disappointments in our worldly affairs. In the conduct of trade and business, however wisely managed, however diligently followed, the most industrious and the most judicious may meet with reverses. The most pleasing and flattering prospects may be obscured by some unexpected failure of others, or sudden and unlooked for losses; the wealthy man may be reduced even to poverty, and his riches, having made themselves wings, have taken their flight, and left him poor and needy. How many such sad events have we lately witnessed in this commercial country, and in these changeable times!

But under these distressing circumstances, the Christian must not give way to excessive sorrow,—that "sorrow of the world which worketh death." He must not repair to dissipation, that he may forget his troubles, much less to suicide, as too many have done. No; Grace will enable him, though, like Job, bereft of his whole substance, to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." If the Christian have lost his worldly goods, he has treasure laid up in Heaven, secure beyond the reach of moth, and rust, and thieves; out of the power of dishonest servants, or fraudulent debtors, or crafty swindlers. And if he learn by the loss and failure of earthly goods to "set his affection on those that are above," he becomes a real gainer. Thus have we often seen a little bird perched on the bough of a tree, disturbed or alarmed by some approaching danger, change his position, and flit from bough to bough, till at length, to get beyond the reach of harms, he spreads his wings, and soars to safer regions. And thus the ancient saints "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in Heaven a better and enduring substance;" "they sought a better country, that is, an heavenly;" they looked for the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Heb. x. 34, and xi. 16.

7. Persecution is another of those evils

to which the people of God are exposed; and persecution, in some form and in some degree, must always be expected by those who "will live godly in Christ Jesus." But it is a thing no less mysterious than grievous, that men should be abused for righteousness' sake; that the excellent of the earth, beloved of God, and heirs of glory, should be despised and ill-treated by their fellow-men. Yet thus it has been, must be, and will be to the end. As long as there are men "born after the flesh," there will be hatred and opposition against those who are "born after the Spirit." But, out of this unpromising lion, sweet honey has been procured. When, upon the dispersion of the disciples, occasioned by the martyrdom of Stephen, they travelled into distant parts, they "went everywhere preaching the word;" Judea and Samaria were the gainers. Persecution, while it opposes the truth of the Gospel, wonderfully confirms it. The prediction of Christ is fully accomplished, for he came not to send peace, but a sword; and though the Gospel has the most powerful tendency to promote concord, it becomes, through the corruption of man, the occasion of the most cruel divisions; and thus, also, it proves the truth of the apostolic declaration, that the carnal mind is enmity against God.

8. The subject may even be extended to Death itself. The death of Christ, though according to the determinate counsel, and fore-knowledge of God, was effected by the cruel hands of wicked men. Never was any murder so atrocious as that of the Son of God, the Prince of Life, the Lord of Glory! In itself, it was the basest and most detestable action ever committed by apostate men. Then, the father of lies and the murderer of souls seemed to triumph; while the friends of the Redeemer were ready to despond. "We trusted," said they, "that it had been He who should have redeemed Israel; but his death had, for a season, extinguished their hopes. But bitter as seemed this event to the disciples, what ever produced so much sweetness? From the striking of this Rock, what copious streams of consolation have ever since been flowing to refresh the Church in the wilderness! All comfort springs from this source; and the triumphant song of Heaven shall be, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain!"

Apply this also to the Death of believers. Nothing to nature is so formidable as death: it is the king of terrors; and through the fear of it, many are, all their

life-time, subject to bondage. The terrible sufferings that frequently precede it, the heart-rending separation it makes between the dearest relatives, the subsequent circumstances of the shroud, the coffin, the grave, the corruption, and the worms, all combine to render death the most horrible of human evils. Such, indeed, is the carcass of the lion; but search and see; is there no honey within? Is there nothing to lessen the terrors of the tomb, and reconcile man to the grave? Yes; there is much every way. The sting of death is extracted. That which makes death so awful is sin; but sin is pardoned; the believer is justified; he has "passed from death unto life, and shall never come into condemnation." And not only so, but Death is *gain*,—inexpressible advantage to the Christian. He leaves a troublesome world, a diseased body, a disordered soul—to be with Christ, to see his face, to behold his glory, to be perfectly like him, and to join the blessed society of saints and angels in the presence, and worship, and enjoyment of God.

'Tis good at thy word to be here;
'Tis better in thee to be gone.

CONCLUSION.

1. LET us be led, by what we have heard, to adore the wisdom and goodness of God, in bringing good out of evil. Christians! looking back on the years that are past, and on the wilderness through which you have travelled, you may perceive the skeletons of those lions which have been slain, and from whose carcasses you have taken honey. Sweet is the remembrance of evils surmounted, of enemies vanquished, and of terrifying disasters turned into blessings! And how divinely true is the scriptural maxim:—"All things work together for good, to them that love God, who are the Called, according to his purpose!" Set your seal to this truth, and give glory to Him who made them thus salutary and beneficial.

2. On the contrary, it is painful to reflect on the state of natural and wicked men, who are, unhappily, so entirely under the power of sin and Satan, that they continually extract evil, even from good. Their health, their strength, their talents, their wealth, their tables, and all their comforts, are perverted and abused; like Jeshurun of old, they "wax fat, and kick against God." The word of God itself is abused and perverted; and they wrest, to their own destruction, the Gospel of salvation; their prejudices are excited, and their

hearts are hardened, by those very doctrines of the Bible which should humble them in the dust, and make them heartily thankful to be saved by grace alone.

3. Finally, What an argument may we derive from this subject, for the commitment of ourselves, and all our concerns, into the hands of an all-wise and all-gracious God! Let us not choose for ourselves, but commit our way to Him, who is too wise to err, too good to be unkind. We are unable to comprehend the whole plan of his proceedings. We see but a small part, and cannot judge correctly of the whole. A child, looking at a clock or a watch, might suppose, that, because the wheels move in contrary directions, something must be wrong; and an ordinary spectator, viewing the movements of a great and complicated machine, might be at a loss to know the tendency and result of the whole; while the artist who constructed it, knows well the use and design of every spring and wheel. So the great and blessed God, who knows the end from the beginning, orders all things, in his infinite wisdom, to produce the best effect,—the glory of his name, and the salvation of his people. Little did Joseph imagine, when cruelly sold by his brethren, when falsely accused by his mistress, when laid in the dungeon in irons, that all this should lead to the fulfilment of his prophetic dreams, his advancement to the government of Egypt, or the support of his father and brothers in the years of famine! Little did Job suppose, when deprived of his substance, of his children, of his health, and reduced to the lowest state of misery, that this should lead to prosperity, and honor, and happiness, greater than he ever knew before! "Cast," then, "all your care upon God, for he careth for you;" "be careful," that is, anxious, "for nothing; but in all things, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God;—unto God, "who performeth all things for us." He who provided honey for Samson, out of the carcass of the lion; he who "meant for good," all the severities that Joseph suffered; he who "turned again the captivity of Job, and gave him twice as much as he had before,"—will, in his own time and way, give you a practical solution of Samson's riddle, and cause you thankfully to say,—"Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." "O, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"

PRAYER.—GREAT Ruler of the world, thou doest all things well! Thy way is sometimes in the sea, and thy path cannot be traced; but all thy paths are mercy and truth to thy people! Thou bringest good out of evil; and they that sow in tears are enabled to reap in joy. Thou knowest how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and render them, by their trials, more watchful and humble. Thou makest the poor of the flock rich in faith, and causest them to trust in the name of the Lord. Bodily sufferings, domestic trials, worldly losses, and persecution for righteousness' sake, are all made to work together for the good of thy children; and even Death itself shall prove their richest gain. O God, we adore thy wisdom and kindness, in thus bringing good out of evil; and we desire to learn to trust in thee at all times. We would commit all our concern into thy hands, and cast all our cares upon thee, happy in believing that thou carest for us. We would be anxiously careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgivings, make known our requests unto thee. To thee, O Lord, be all glory and praise, world without end! Amen.

SERMON XCVI.

THE PROFITABLE JOURNEY.

Numbers x. 29. We are journeying unto the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you. Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel.

THE society of our fellow-creatures cannot but produce some effect upon us, either good or bad; its influence is very considerable; and much, therefore, depends on the choice we make of our associates. The constitution of our nature is such, that we readily, and often insensibly, imitate our companions; and are strengthened either in good or in evil by our connexions. Hence, the wisest of men long ago said, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Wicked men are very desirous of inducing others to concur with them; they also say, "Come with us, and we will do you good; but they deceive and betray. On the contrary, good men earnestly wish, and would gladly persuade others to walk with them in the ways of God; and with great truth they may say, "We will do you good." Thus, in the passage before us, Moses entreats Hobab (elsewhere called Jethro) his father-in-law, to accompany him, his family, and the children of Israel under his care, to the land of Canaan, the place which God had promised to give them; assuring him that it would be for his great advantage so to do. Now, this is also the language of pious persons to their relatives, friends, and

neighbors; they are fully persuaded that "it shall be well with the righteous;"—that their "labor shall not be in vain in the Lord;" and that a life of faith and holiness shall certainly be crowned with eternal felicity. They wish, therefore, that their friends and connexions may pursue the same course with them, and obtain the same happiness.

Accommodating the words to this purpose, we may derive from them the following observations:

I. God has spoken great and good things concerning the future state of his people.

II. They are now on their journey to take possession of the promised blessings.

III. They should invite and encourage others to accompany them.

I. We observe that God has spoken great and good things concerning the future and eternal state of his people.

We are not to consider this world as our rest, or final abode. Good men, in all ages, have acknowledged they were mere travellers. The patriarch Jacob, when asked by the king of Egypt how old he was, replied, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." Gen. xlvii. 9. In like manner, David, though a king upon the throne, surrounded with all the honors and luxuries of royalty, confesses himself "a stranger and a pilgrim, as all his fathers were;" as in Psalms. And St. Peter uses the same language when writing to the Christians of his time, whom he exhorts, as "pilgrims and strangers, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." 1 Pet. ii. 11.

Hence it is that men of religion have always looked forward to another and a better state. The patriarchs, to whom life and immortality was not so fully and clearly revealed as to us, possessed that faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;" they lived and died in faith; confessing that they were "strangers and pilgrims on the earth:" from which St. Paul infers that they "desired and sought a better country; that is, an heavenly one." Heb. xi. 13—16. Hence also it is that the primitive believers said,—"Our conversation (our traffic, our citizenship) is in Heaven." Our chief business is with that heavenly country to which we belong, and to which we are travelling. Phil. iii. 20.

This blessed expectation is grounded

on the faithfulness of God:—"The Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." He had said of Canaan,—the land that flowed with milk and honey, "*I will give it you.*" This promise he had made to Abraham 400 years before; and renewed it again and again to his posterity. Moses, therefore, speaks of it as absolutely certain; and promises Hobab a share in the goodly inheritance; and thus, to all believers, God hath made the promise of eternal life. Not only shall all their sins be pardoned, but there is a rest prepared for them; God intends to make them happy for ever in his own presence, where there is "fullness of joy; and at his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore."

The country promised to Israel was extremely beautiful and fertile. It is thus described (Deut. viii. 7, &c.): "For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land; a land of brooks of water; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates; a land of olive, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness; thou shalt not lack any thing in it." Was not this delightful country a type of the heavenly world, an emblem of Immanuel's land? Yes; but the type is faint; it doth not yet fully appear what we shall *be*, or what we shall enjoy; it is enough to know "that we shall be with Christ, and that we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

2. Let us pass on to a second observation. Believers are now on their journey, to take possession of this heavenly country: "We are journeying (said Moses to Hobab) to the promised place."

These persons believed the promise. Of old, a promise of rest was given; given generally; given to Israel at large; but the word of promise did not profit them, not being mixed with faith. Many of them disbelieved the promise; they denied the power and the faithfulness of God to fulfil it: and God, provoked by their unbelief, sware in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest. The apostle, therefore, warns us against imitating their example, lest we also, "having a promise left us, of entering into his rest, should, by any means, come short of it."

These travellers to the heavenly Canaan, like those of old, have left Egypt. Once they were in bondage to sin, and Satan, and the world. They were "foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another;" but since "the kindness and love of God our

Savior towards man appeared," they have been actually "redeemed from their vain conversation;" their "soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler: the snare is broken, and they are escaped." Ps. cxxiv. 7.

Delivered from Egypt, they are now in the wilderness. Such, indeed, is "this present evil world," barren of good, fruitful only of sin, and infested by ferocious beasts; there, roams abroad their deadly adversary the Devil, who, "as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may destroy;" there creeps the subtle serpent, who, with his malignant and undetected wiles, deceiveth the whole world.

Yet here, even here, the manna falls about their tents: "he commands the clouds from above; he opens the doors of Heaven; he rains down manna upon them to eat, and gives them of the corn of Heaven; man eateth angels' food; he sends them meat to the full." Psal. lxxviii. 24, 25. Yea, their "Heavenly Father giveth them the true bread from Heaven; even his flesh, which is meat indeed, and his blood, which is drink indeed:" and partaking of which, they "shall never die, but have everlasting life." John vi. 33, 51, 55.

Here, too, they enjoy divine direction. Of old, when Israel was passing through the wilderness, a pillar of a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night, directed their march, and conducted them, by a right way, towards the city of habitations; and thus the Lord still "creates upon every dwelling-place of Mount Zion (the Christian church) and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night:"—or, in other words, Jesus Christ is the constant, gentle, unerring guide of his people; directing them by his word, his example, his Spirit, to avoid the dangers which surround them, and to persevere in the path to glory.

Like the ancient Israel, they have a sovereign and almighty Protector. "He looked through" the luminous cloud that directed their way, "and troubled the host of the Egyptians,"—so disconcerted their warlike and enraged pursuers, that they abandoned their enterprise, and in vain sought their own safety by flight: and thus believers may still say, "The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge;" and they may thence safely infer, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

The cloudy pillar also served the purpose of a spacious umbrella, or salutary screen from the burning rays of the sun

in a sandy desert; and thus also the Christian finds a cool retreat, "as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land," when he casts his burdens on the Lord; and, satisfied that "all things work together for good," resigns himself to the disposal of his all-wise and all-gracious Savior.

Such being the privileges, and such the expectations of the Christian Israel, they cannot but wish their relations, their friends, and their neighbors to enjoy the same; which leads us to the third head of our discourse.

3. Travellers to Zion should invite and encourage others to accompany them;—as Moses said to Hobab,—“Come thou with us, and we will do thee good.”

Moses was related to Hobab; and certainly our relations have the first claim to our pious regards. Hear how St. Paul expressed his earnest desires for the salvation of his kindred:—“I have great heaviness (said he) and continual sorrow in my heart for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh;” and the reason he gives is, that formerly, in his unconverted state, he did “wish himself accursed (or separated) from Christ:”—he was once like them, and desired to have nothing to do with Christ; he could, therefore, feel for them and pity them; and his “earnest desire and prayer to God for them was, that they might be saved.” Rom. ix. 1; and x. 1, &c. Thus should we pity and pray for those who are still walking in the broad road to destruction, and tenderly invite and entreat them to walk with us in the narrow way that leads to everlasting life. And there are several methods in which we may try to do this.

1. By inviting them to hear the Gospel faithfully preached. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” The Gospel of Christ is “the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth.” It is the ordinance of God for that purpose. He qualifies his ministers by spiritual gifts to preach the word; and has promised to be always with them, in their labors; it is good, therefore, to be found in the right way: it was thus the first disciples of Christ acted. When our Lord had called Andrew, Andrew brought his brother Peter to Jesus; and the day after, when he called Philip, Philip invited Nathaniel to come and see the Messiah, whom he had found. In like manner, when the woman of Samaria had found the Savior, she went her way into the city where she lived, and said to the men, “Come, see a man who told me all things

that ever I did; is not this the Christ?” and in consequence of this, many came, heard, and believed, to the saving of their souls. Kindly invite, therefore, your relations, friends, and neighbors, to come and hear the Gospel of Christ, which has been so useful to yourselves, and it may be that God will make it an equal blessing to them.

2. We may promote the salvation of others by serious and affectionate conversation. We readily converse with our neighbors on the news of the day, whether it be good or evil. Why should we be backward to tell them the best news that ever reached our ears?—“the good tidings of the Gospel,—that Jesus Christ is come into the world to save sinners?” Why should we cruelly refrain from warning them against the wrath to come? and exhorting them to flee for refuge to the great Deliverer? We are too often sinfully silent: “but a word spoken in season, how good is it!” and “a wholesome tongue is a tree of life.” A single sentence wisely and kindly spoken, has often been made the means of conversion. Only let us take care to make it evident that we wish to do good, and not to gratify our pride or our anger; let it be done in the spirit of our text,—“Come thou with us, and we will do thee good.”

3. The heads of families must endeavor to do good to their households by maintaining family worship. This is the indispensable duty of a Christian master; and he criminally disregards the souls of his children and servants who neglects it. Reading the Scriptures, and offering up prayers every morning and evening (and not on the Lord’s Day only) is one of the most effectual means of doing good; and it is what God has eminently blessed to the salvation of multitudes. Let it be engaged in, in the fear of God, and you may confidently expect his blessing.

4. We may promote the salvation of the rising generation by giving encouragement to Sunday Schools, and other plans for the religious education of children. Some may assist them by subscribing towards their support; and others by their personal help. Young persons of piety and zeal may offer to God an acceptable sacrifice, by devoting a portion of their time and their talents to this great object:—an object of the most useful and laudable nature ever devised for the good of mankind, especially of the poorer classes of society. Yea, we may extend our invitation to fellow-creatures in the most distant parts of the world, by

the encouragement of Missionary Societies. We may not be able *personally* to invite Turks, and Jews, and Infidels, to unite with us as Christians; but we may, by our prayers, and our contributions, enable others who are qualified and disposed for the work, to go to the Heathen, and preach among them "The unsearchable riches of Christ."

5. The distribution of Religious Tracts is another method in which we easily invite many around us to come and unite with us, that we may do them good. There is now a great variety of these provided, suited to every class and character of people, old and young, rich and poor, which may be procured in considerable numbers at a very cheap rate; and which may be dispersed with great ease, and in many directions. God has been pleased, so remarkably, to bless this humble mean of doing good, that we shall be very blamable if we do not avail ourselves of it, and use it as extensively as we can.

6. But all these means must be accomplished with prayer. The blessing of the Lord alone can render them effectual. Let every effort then be begun, continued, and ended with prayer. Then may we reasonably hope to prevail with others to go with us; and then by the blessed aid of the Holy Spirit, we shall do them real good.

7. Above all, and together with all, let our holy, blameless, and useful lives, recommend the ways of religion to men. Many, perhaps, will be too much prejudiced against serious religion to listen to our advice, to go with us to the house of God; or even to accept or read our tracts; still, let us endeavor to win them by our lives: thus, let us "hold forth the word of life." Let our meekness, our patience, our benevolence, our strict and uniform morality, recommend our religion, that so, as St. Peter directs, "they who will not hear the word, may be won by our conversation or conduct;" and be constrained by the lustre of divine grace displayed in our holy and useful lives, to say "We will go with you, for God is with you."

"We will do you good." This is the argument we are to use; and truly, association with godly persons will be productive of great advantage. We *must* associate with some persons,—good or bad: and what will be the result? The wisest of men, as before observed, declares, that "he that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Prov. xiii. 30.—Those who would be good, must keep good company; this shows that

they really wish to be good, and it is one of the best means of becoming so. The company of good men will prevent much evil; it will prevent many temptations to it, or at least compliance with temptation: it will greatly promote our religious knowledge, for much may be learned from good men, as well as from good books and good sermons; not to the neglect of these, but in addition to them; and the example of good men will strengthen the inclination to good: while, on the contrary, "a companion of fools" (and all wicked men are fools) "shall be destroyed." Multitudes are brought to ruin by bad company. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Beware, then, young people, beware; and, "if sinners entice you, consent not. Walk thou not in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path." Prov. i. 10. 15.

IMPROVEMENT.

By way of improvement, Let us ask ourselves What influence have all the good things which God has promised in his Gospel had upon us? he has set before us his well-beloved Son; and in him Pardon and Peace, Holiness and Heaven:—all we can want to make us happy in time, happy in death, happy to all eternity. And are we drawn by these cords of love? Are we induced to forsake the sins and vanities of the world? Have we set out on our journey towards Heaven, determined to be fellow-travellers with the people of God?—Or do we hesitate? Are we like unbelieving Israel, many of whom turned back again in their hearts towards Egypt,—and to whom God "swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest?" Let conscience answer; and O "let us fear lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it." Heb. iv. 1.

But let the humble and sincere traveller rest assured that he shall not be disappointed. "He is faithful who hath promised." He who promised all this good, will assuredly bestow it. So Joshua found it; and when Israel was put into full possession of the promised inheritance, he made the following appeal to the people:—"Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you: all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof." Jos. xxiii. 14.—What an encouragement is this to pro-

ceed! Believe then his word, and take courage; and go on your way rejoicing.

Christians, be excited by what you have heard, to imitate Moses the man of God; and say, as he in our text says, to your relations, your friends, and your neighbors, "Come with us, and we will do you good." Are there none in your family, are there none among your acquaintances, whom you may thus invite? Think, inquire, try. You know not what good you may do: make the experiment. Should you, by the blessing of God, convert a sinner from the error of his ways, you will save an immortal soul from eternal death; and hide, for ever, the multitude of his sins. O! what a blessing would this be, both to him and to you!

And now, how would it crown the subject, if any, not before religious, should say, in the language of some persons of old (Zech. viii. 23,) "*We will go with you!*"—and for this good reason, "*we have heard that God is with you.*" God is indeed with his people; it is, therefore, good to go with them. Go with them to the house of God, to "set forth his most worthy praise, to hear his most holy word; and to ask for those things which are requisite, as well for the body as the soul." Join the people of God in their sincere and fervent devotions; unite with them in the faith and hope of the Gospel; and walk with them in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blamelessly. Yea, say as the pious Ruth said to her mother-in-law Naomi (Ruth i. 16.) "*Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God, my God; where thou diest, I will die; and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.*"

PRAYER.—ETERNAL GOD, we thy sinful and unworthy creatures, are but pilgrims and travelers in the present world. Here we have no continuing city, but we desire to seek that which is above. We learn, from thy holy word, that thou hast spoken good concerning Israel.—good things *here*, even pardon and peace through the blood of the Lamb; and better things *hereafter*, even fullness of joy at thy right hand, and pleasures for evermore! Give us, O Lord, we beseech thee, that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen, that so we may forsake the vanities of this world, and earnestly seek the things that are above!—and enable us, we pray thee, to use our best endeavors to persuade others to go with us;—make them willing in the day of thy power, and induce them to say, *We will go with you, for God is with you.*—Grant this, O God, for the sake of Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life!

SERMON XCVII.

THE WATER AND THE BLOOD; OR, COMPLETE PURIFICATION.

1 John v. 6. This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ: not by water only, but by water and blood.

In these words, the venerable writer, St. John, evidently alludes to a fact which he witnessed at Calvary, where he beheld the heart-breaking spectacle,—the Crucifixion of his adorable and beloved Lord. He notices this special circumstance in his Gospel history, John xix. 34, 35. "One of the soldiers, with a spear, pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water." The evangelist deemed this of peculiar importance, for he adds, "He that saw it bare record, and his record is true." It was a law of the Jews, that the body of a malefactor should not remain all night on the tree, but it must be taken down before sun-set, and buried; it was, therefore, common, in order to hasten the death of the criminal, if not actually dead before the sun was setting, to break his legs; and this was done in the case of the two thieves who suffered with our Lord; but when the soldiers came to the middle cross, they concluded from his pale countenance, and his head which reclined on his breast, that he was actually dead: yet, one of the executioners, either wantonly, and insultingly, or to please the rancorous Jews, or more fully to ascertain that he was dead, pierced his sacred side with a spear. Whatever might have been the soldier's motive, an important point was thereby gained,—it was put out of the power of the Jews to pretend that Christ did not positively die; for had not this fact been unquestionably certain, they would have had some plausible pretence for denying his resurrection from the dead; but the piercing of his side, and its effects, as here related, afforded a most certain proof that he really and truly died.

Anatomists inform us that there is a kind of bag, called the *pericardium*, in which the heart is placed, and which contains a small quantity of water;—this was pierced, and probably the heart also, in which case death must necessarily ensue, if it had not before taken place.

To this historic fact, the apostle here alludes; and he considers it symbolically. Water, it is well known, has been used in all ages to cleanse the body; and it has also been used religiously, as an emblem of the blood and spirit of Christ, by which the souls of men are cleansed from sin.

The double design of the death of Christ seems to be pointed out by "the blood and water" which issued from his pierced side. The apostle therefore says, "he came by water and blood;"—"not by water only, but by water and blood;"—he came not by water only,—he came not only to *sanctify* them, so that they might be pure and holy in their lives and conduct; but he came by "blood also;"—he came to shed his most precious blood, to expiate the offences of his people, to make a perfect and satisfactory atonement for sin, and thus,

"To be of sin the double cure,—
To cleanse us from its guilt and power.

The object of this discourse is to show that

The design of Christ's death was to procure both the JUSTIFICATION and SANCTIFICATION of the Church.

The first part of this design is declared by St. John in this epistle, chapter the 1st, verse the 7th:—"The blood of Jesus Christ his Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Let us dwell a little on this heart-cheering truth; for cheering it is to all who are conscious of the defilement of their souls by sin. *Cleansing* is a term which supposes defilement; and sin is in Scripture represented to be horribly defiling, rendering the soul impure, odious, and abominable in the sight of God, who is perfectly pure and holy. So our Lord represented it, when he detected the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who are scrupulously exact in washing their hands before eating, and in various external ceremonies of purification; but he, the great Searcher of hearts, declares that it is by "those things which proceed from the heart" that men are defiled; such as "evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies;"—these, said he, "these are the things which defile a man." These render a man unfit for communion with God in the present world; these disqualify him for admission into the heavenly state, where nothing that defileth can be admitted. Let none, then, deceive themselves in this matter; "If I wash thee not," said Christ to Peter, "thou hast no part with me;" and so he saith to us all.

And here let us pause a moment; and let each one ask himself,—“Am I convinced of the defilement of my nature, and of my guilt as a sinner before God? Shame and self-loathing are the proper effects of such a conviction; but do I feel shame? Do I loathe myself, and cry with the leper,—“Unclean! unclean!”

When Ezra confessed the sins of his people, "he fell on his knees, and spread out his hands to the Lord, and said, O my God! I am ashamed, and blush to lift up my face to thee my God! for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens!"—Do *we* blush when we recollect and confess our sins?—When Job, though a good man, considered the glorious holiness and majesty of God, and contrasted with it his own sinfulness, he also cried, "Behold I am vile! I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes!"—Such was the humility and abasement of ancient saints:—what is ours!

If we are duly sensible of our sinful defilement, we shall certainly be anxious for cleansing. And how can this be obtained? The tears of repentance will not wash away our sins. The water of baptism cannot cleanse our souls. Nor is mere reformation and moral improvement sufficient. But, behold the divine provision! Behold the precious blood issuing from the wounded side of the Son of God! "This is he that came by blood." He came from heaven on purpose, to give his life a ransom for us. Here behold the desert of sin: "The wages of sin is death." Justice demands the death of the sinner; but grace admits of a substitute; yea, provides one: "Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!"—who taketh away sin "by the sacrifice of himself;" "for he bore our sins in his own body on the tree." (1 Pet. ii. 24.) "He was wounded for our transgressions; he was bruised for our iniquities: and the Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all." Isa. liii. 5, 6. This is the great leading doctrine of the Gospel, and ought to be regarded, in the first place, by every one who desires salvation. This appears from the care which the Author of our religion took to keep up a constant attention to it in his church; for he has appointed the Sacrament of the Supper to perpetuate it. When, therefore, he instituted this ordinance, he said to his disciples, when he gave them the cup, "This is *my blood* of the *New Testament*, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins;—this do in remembrance of me."

In the *Old Testament* times, blood was shed,—sacrifices were offered,—and the sinner was taught, that "without shedding of blood there could be no remission;" but, he was taught at the same time that cleansing was attainable by blood; and he was directed to look forward to the time when the Son of God should appear to

finish transgression, and "to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity; and to bring in everlasting righteousness." Daniel ix. 24.

The blood of which we speak, procures the justification of all who believe. We are said, Rom. v. 9, to be "justified through faith in his (Christ's) blood;" elsewhere, to "be brought nigh by his blood;" and again, to be "redeemed by his blood;" and, to be "washed from our sins in his blood." All these expressions show that it is by the sacrifice of Christ that sinners are justified, or declared to be righteous.

But it is "through faith" that we are thus justified; Jesus Christ is "a propitiation for our sins:" but it is "through faith in his blood;" it must be received by every man, for himself in particular. Christ is held forth, *generally*, in the Gospel.—"Here," as if God said, "Here is my Son, and eternal life through him. Who among you desires to be washed in his blood, and saved from wrath through him?" "I (answers the humble believer;) I desire nothing in all the world so much. I believe the testimony which God gives of his Son. I judge the Lord, who hath promised life, through him, to the faithful; and I would gladly receive Christ with my whole heart." "Receive him then (saith God) he is thine; he that hath the Son hath life, and shall never come into condemnation."

It is thus that guilt is discharged from the conscience, and the peace of God is obtained. It is thus that the mind is relieved from the oppressive burden of sin. For, as St. Paul argues, Heb. ix. 13th, "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctified to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ purge (cleanse) your conscience from dead works to serve the living God!"

The perfect efficacy of this blood is frequently expressed in Scripture in very strong terms:—"I have blotted out (saith God) thy sins as a thick cloud."—"Though your sins were as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow;"—Yea, (says the penitent Psalmist) wash me and I shall be whiter than snow;" and again,—"as far as the East is from the West, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." "This is he that came by *blood*."

But our text farther says, "This is he that came by water also." Some understand this to signify *Baptism*; but this does not agree so well with the scope of the whole passage; but we shall consider it, as

proposed in the beginning of this discourse, as signifying a second blessed effect of the death of Christ,—the Sanctification of believers, in virtue of that death. This is the second part of our discourse.

We should study to know the full and complete design of the death of Christ. The apostle John, in our text, seems to be anxious that we should do so. It is, indeed, the weakness of our nature frequently to regard one part of a subject and neglect the other; and it is too often unhappily so in the subject before us. If we should consider Christ as coming into the world by *water* only;—that is, only to purify us to himself, although this is a very great and glorious design of his death, and an essential branch of his great salvation, yet it is not the whole of it. And if, on the other hand, we should acknowledge in the death of Christ no other design than to make an atonement for sin, and thereby save us from wrath, we should neglect another and an equally important object of the Savior's sufferings. And there is reason to fear that some well-disposed persons have fallen into this error. There has been, by the grace of God, a very considerable revival, of late years, of the great and distinguishing truth of the Protestant religion,—Justification through faith in the blood of Christ; but, as men are ever prone to extremes, some have, in their zeal for this doctrine, neglected, if not denied the twin-doctrine, if so I may call it, of Sanctification by the Spirit of Christ; which is as if they would say, This is he that came by *blood* only, and not both by water and blood. Let us not then separate what God hath so closely connected, but let us be concerned to derive from the meritorious death of our Redeemer *both* these invaluable blessings,—Justification, of which we have already spoken, and Purification or Sanctification, of which we now proceed to speak.

The necessity, the absolute necessity of inward purification arises from that pollution and defilement of our nature, which have been already mentioned: and it would by no means be sufficient for our final happiness, that merely the guilt of sin should be removed, and punishment remitted;—it is equally necessary that "the heart should be purified;" and that we should "be renewed in the spirit of our minds." And, that this *was* the design of the Redeemer's death, appears from the declaration of St. Paul (Titus ii. 14.) where, speaking of the "glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, he says,—"Who gave himself for

us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;"—and in another place (Eph. ii. 28, &c.) where he strongly affirms that "by grace we are saved, through faith, and not of works, lest any man should boast," he adds, according to the spirit of our text, and as it were, uniting "the water with the blood," "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them." And, as both these blessings were united in the design of our Savior when he laid down his life for us, so are they united in the desires and prayers of every sincere penitent. Observe the case of the royal penitent, Psalm li. He begins his prayer by a petition for mercy, and that God would "blot out his transgressions;" but he afterwards cries as earnestly, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me!"

This cleansing implies more than amendment of life and reformation of manners; for this is possible, even where the love of sin is retained in the heart, and speculative iniquity habitually indulged. It is also far more than baptism, which is but "the outward visible sign of that inward grace" of sanctification of which we speak. Our Lord, indeed, insists upon being born of water and of the Spirit," which some interpret of Baptism. But, that our Lord did not intend Baptism by that expression, seems to be plain; for Baptism was not then instituted when he made this declaration to Nicodemus: our Lord then declared, with the most awful solemnity, that "except a man were born again, he could not see the kingdom of Heaven;" but if baptism were meant, it would then follow that no unbaptized person could on any account be saved;—which we trust few would venture to assert. It is also implied in our Lord's words, That whosoever is born again shall be saved;—but who will dare to affirm that every baptized person shall be saved?

It is, indeed, true, that baptism is a type or emblem of regeneration; and, as a divine ordinance, representative of spiritual purification, Christ may be said to "come by water;" in the same manner as in the wine, used in the Lord's Supper; and representative of his death, he may be said to "come by blood;" yet these are by no means the chief things intended; they are but "the shadow,—the body is Christ."

The Sanctification for which we plead is a supernatural principle, or habit of grace, implanted and preserved by the

Spirit of God in the hearts of believers, whereby they are enabled to live unto God, and perform that obedience to him, which he requires and accepts through Jesus Christ.

This purification is, by the mediation of Christ *meritoriously*,—by faith in Christ, *instrumentally*,—and by the agency of the Holy Spirit, *efficaciously*.

(1.) It is by the Mediation of Christ, *meritoriously*. We owe to Jesus Christ the renovation of our nature in the image of God; for he died to "bring us to God;"—to "redeem us to God;"—"he gave himself for the Church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word: that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish." Eph. v. 25.

(2.) It is through faith in Christ, *instrumentally*. Believers only are the subjects of sanctification. "Sanctify them through thy truth," said our Lord in his prayer for his disciples, "thy word is truth:" and again he said, "Ye are clean, through the word which I have spoken unto you." It is by a view of Christ, and of the cross of Christ, that the world is crucified to us,—that it loses all its bewitching charms, and that "we are crucified to the world," so that they gladly separate themselves from us. It was thus that the primitive Christians "purified their souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit." (1 Pet. i. 22.) it was thus that the idolatrous and vicious heathen "purified their hearts through faith." (Acts xv. 9.)

(3.) But it is *efficiently*, by the Holy Spirit, that believers are sanctified. This is his special work; and he is called *The Holy Spirit*, not merely because he is holy in his own Divine nature, necessarily so, but because he is the author of all the holiness that is to be found in the world; all springs from him, as light from the sun; and it is therefore called (1 Pet. i. 22.) "Sanctification of the Spirit:" in connexion with "belief of the truth."

(4.) The sanctification of believers is promoted by *the means of grace*, as religious ordinances of divine appointment are properly called. Faith itself usually "cometh by hearing; and hearing by the word of God." This is the "sincere milk of the word," by which believers grow and thrive; and this renders the knowledge of Christ by the Gospel so admirably useful, that all Christians may, with holy Paul, "account all things but loss" for the sake of its acquisition.

The Lord's Supper is one of the most eminent among the means of grace and instruments of sanctification; it not only maintains the remembrance of Christ crucified, but it is calculated to excite hatred to sin, love to the Savior, and brotherly affection to fellow-Christians, while it gives occasion for the renewal of our vows and engagements to be the Lord's.

Prayer is, in a high degree, a sanctifying exercise: Every grace is employed in it, and strengthened by it. Our knowledge, our humility, our faith, our hope, our love to God and man, all are employed, and by exercise increased, in this holy duty. It was said of old, no less truly than proverbially, "Praying will make a man leave off sinning, or sinning will make him leave off praying."

Praising God, by singing psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, not only "makes melody in the ears of God," but it is highly beneficial to man; it exalts his conceptions of his glorious Benefactor, reminds him of his obligations, excites his gratitude, and enforces his obedience.

(5.) To these we may add, the various afflictions, with which God, in his holy providence, visits his people. These, indeed, are, for the present, "not joyous but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards they work together for good, and produce the peaceable fruits of righteousness." They remind us of the evil of sin, and embitter it to us; they lessen our valuation of earthly things; they wean us from the world, and diminish our dependence on creatures; they blunt the edge of worldly affections, and teach us to stretch our wings, and soar towards the happy world in which afflictions are known no more.

Thus may we sing:—O happy rod,
That brought us nearer to our God!

CONCLUSION.

1. LET us reflect, with becoming humility, on our natural defilement.

Was it necessary that the Son of God should suffer, and bleed, and die? Is it necessary that the Holy Spirit should exert his divine energy? and is it necessary that Ordinances and Providences should all concur in our purification? How deep then must have been the defilement of our nature! Is all this necessary to make us clean? how humbly then should we walk with our God! that, as it is written (Ezek. xvi. 63,) "We may remember, and be confounded, and never open our mouth any more, because of our shame, although the Lord be pacified towards us for all that we have done."

2. And if we are by nature thus defiled, how necessary is it that we should be cleansed! If Jesus wash us not in his precious blood, and renew us by his Holy Spirit, we can have no part with him, either in this world or in that which is to come. Look then to Jesus for this double cure of sin: seek the efficacy both of the water and the blood; and let no one dare to separate what God hath joined. Both are equally necessary; and if we have not both, we have neither. Justification and Sanctification, though distinct in their nature,—the former respecting our *state*, and the latter our *disposition*, are equally necessary and essential to our salvation; and both are the free gifts of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. But seek Justification first; and do not suppose you must first be sanctified, in order to recommend you to God, and induce him to show you mercy; but first of all come to God as a guilty sinner for pardon, through the blood of Christ; and then cry to him to be sanctified, as a helpless believer, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

3. Let believers in Christ, already sanctified in part, still look to Jesus for further supplies of grace. Our Lord has pronounced a blessing on those "who hunger and thirst after righteousness;" and he has added a gracious promise to such persons—"they shall be filled." We are apt to sit down with ordinary attainments, and content ourselves if we are like others. But we should press forward towards perfection, and earnestly desire a more complete conformity to Christ our great example; that "as he was, we also may be in this world." (1 John, iv. 17.) And let us pray for ourselves, as St. Paul prayed for the Thessalonians, (1 Thess. v. 23,) "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ:" and may we pray in faith, believing the promise added,—"Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." Amen.

"Rock of ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee!
Let the water and the blood
From thy riven side which flow'd,
Be of sin the double cure!
Cleanse me from its guilt and pow'r!"

PRAYER.—HOLY Father, we humbly confess before thee the total depravity and defilement of our souls by sin. Shame and confusion of face belong unto us, and we abhor ourselves, repenting in dust and ashes; but whilst we are constrained to cry Unclean, unclean! we rejoice that there is hope of cleansing. We rejoice that Jesus Christ came down from Heaven to purify

a people unto himself; and that he gave himself to death for us, that he might wash us from our sins in his own blood. O wash us in that blood! then shall we be whiter than snow; and deliver us, we humbly beseech thee, not only from the guilt of our sins, but also from their power. We rejoice to read in thy holy word, that from the pierced side of our dear Redeemer issued both blood and water. O that Christ may be made sanctification unto us! Create in us clean hearts, O God, and renew right spirits within us. Thus may we be washed, being both justified and sanctified, and finally presented, with all the church of Jesus, faultless before the throne, with exceeding joy, evermore to praise the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;—to whom be all honor and glory, world without end! Amen.

SERMON XCVIII.

JESUS CHRIST, THE OBJECT OF FAITH, OF LOVE, AND OF JOY.

1 Peter i. 8. Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet, believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

It is a great thing to be a Christian! So thought the apostles; who, writing to the churches, always congratulate them on their having become Christians, and on the privileges to which, as such, they are entitled. "Blessed be God," said holy Peter, "who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!" and having mentioned their faith and hope in him, commends these graces the more, because they had not enjoyed, as many others had, the advantage of seeing Christ in the flesh; for they did not dwell in Judea, but in various distant countries; yet, though they never saw his person, they loved him, and rejoiced in him, having first believed in him, to the saving of their souls.

That which was the character of these primitive believers, is also the character of all true Christians, in every place, and in every age of the world. I shall therefore proceed to show, that

Jesus Christ, though at present invisible, is the Object of the Christian's Faith, and Love, and Joy.

I. *Jesus Christ, though at present unseen, is the object of the Christian's Faith.*

We must take *Faith* as the first in order; for the apostle accounts for their loving him, and for their rejoicing in him, by their having first believed in him.

Jesus Christ is now unseen by us. He was once seen upon earth; and seen by very different eyes: by some he was seen with delight: others beheld him with in-

difference or contempt,—they "saw no beauty in him wherefore they should desire him;" yea, "they turned away their faces from him," with hatred and disgust. A happy few, however, "beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Yea, so enamored with the sight was the pious and aged prophet Simeon, that when once he had clasped the holy infant Jesus in his arms, he wished to see no other object, but exclaimed, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have beheld thy salvation."

To have seen Christ in the flesh, some have thought, would have been the highest of all gratifications; but the sight would have both its advantages and disadvantages. Doubtless, there was something inexpressibly charming in his public discourses and private instructions. Grace was poured into his lips; his hearers wondered at the gracious words which dropped from them; and even his adversaries admitted that never man spake like him. Doubtless, there must have been something surprisingly grand and affecting in the performance of his miracles. How must the spectators have been affected when they saw him cast out demons, give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, a tongue to the dumb, and life to a dead corpse! How striking, how convincing, how astonishing must have been these spectacles!

And yet many of those who saw Christ in the flesh, labored under some disadvantages too. The poverty and the occupation of his supposed father; his own poverty; with the poverty and meanness of his chosen associates—the apostles; the general contempt of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the priests and the rulers; with the ill names, and suspicions, and base imputations under which he lay, proved a dangerous stumbling block to many. Above all, when he had been betrayed by one of his disciples, denied by another, and forsaken by all,—when he had been apprehended and bound like a felon, arraigned at the bar, accused of blasphemy and rebellion, condemned, scourged, spit upon, crowned with thorns, and actually crucified as a malefactor, dead and buried,—how did the hearts, even of his friends, sink and fail them! and they could only sigh, and say, "We trusted that this would have proved he who was to redeem Israel; but now our hopes are buried in his grave!" Such were the prejudices of some, and the fears of others, who beheld him on earth.

But faith is a thing totally distinct from sight, or the evidence of any of our senses. Believing, is giving credit to a report, or testimony, or promise, concerning what we have *not* seen; "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things *not* seen." Heb. xi. 1. Hence it was, that when Christ reproved Thomas, who would not believe the testimony of credible witnesses concerning his resurrection, till he had personally seen him, he said, "Thomas,—because thou hast *seen* me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have *not* seen, and yet have believed!" Perhaps Peter, in our text, alludes to that saying of Christ. The persons to whom he wrote this epistle were "strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bythinia;" consequently they could not have seen Jesus in the flesh, who confined his travels to the Holy Land, and his ministry to the children of Israel; he therefore commends their faith, for they had believed in him, without seeing him. In like manner, *we* must believe in him; *we* must believe on the testimony of God in the Gospel.—"There are three that bear record (or give testimony) in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost;" and this is the substance of the Divine testimony,—that "God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in his Son." 1 John, v. 7, 11. Now this testimony is received, and credited as divinely true; and thus, "He that hath received his testimony hath set his seal that God is true." John iii. 33. He believes that eternal life may be obtained, even by miserable sinners, through the atonement of the Son of God; and he believes the promise, that whosoever cometh to God, by him, shall be accepted; and therefore indulges an humble hope and expectation that he shall be "saved from wrath," and "reign in life, by Jesus Christ." With this blessed hope in Jesus, will he not be sensible of his obligations to the Savior? Will he not say,—"*Yea, he is altogether lovely! this is my beloved, and this is my friend!*" Yes; this is the genuine language of every believer. And this leads us to the second head of our discourse, which is, that,

II. *Jesus Christ is the Object of the Christian's Love.*

The apostle notices it, in our text, as a thing somewhat remarkable, that a person *unseen* should thus be loved; for, among mortals, and in the usual course of human affairs, love is excited, or promoted, by a sight of its subject. To *love* an unseen person is, therefore, more remarkable than

to *believe* in a person unseen; for faith supposes the absence of the thing, or person, concerning whom the testimony is made. But Jesus Christ, of whom we speak, is beloved, though absent, on the testimony of the Holy Spirit, in and by the word; by which word, he is "evidently set forth, crucified among us" (as the apostle speaks to the believing Galatians:) he is *exhibited*, not before the eyes of our bodies, but those of our mind. He is "set forth," by God himself, as "a propitiation for our sins."

Few, comparatively, of those who saw our Lord upon earth, loved him, or duly estimated his amiable character. A few, however, there were, who, like the family of Lazarus and his pious sisters, thought it their honor to receive him into their houses; while some pious women also ministered to him of their substance; and others, having had "much forgiven them, loved him much." And O! could the great number who had been blind, and deaf, and dumb, and paralytic, and feverish, and dropsical, and possessed, and who had received from his hands a sudden, perfect, and gratuitous cure, surrounded him at the same moment, how would they jointly have testified their gratitude and their love! Some few tender-hearted persons sympathized with him under his sufferings, and smote their breasts, in agonies of grief and sorrow:—but, alas! the greater part of the Jewish people "despised and hated him, and cast him out of the vineyard." Unhappy nation! their posterity approve their sayings, and the modern Jews reject and hate him to this day.

Nevertheless, it is the universal, the never-failing character of genuine Christians,—that "they love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;" and an inspired apostle scrupled not to say,—"*If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed.*" And is it not with very good reason that believers love him? Can they not give as good a reason for their love to him, as for their hope in him? Let us recall to mind

The Divine Perfections that he possesses, blended with all the mild and gentle properties of humanity, in its most perfect state. He is "the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his Person;" and "in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." He is "the Almighty;" "all power in Heaven and Earth" is in his hands; "he is Head over all things;" "principalities and powers are all subjected to him." He possesses infinite wisdom,—"all the treasures of wisdom and know-

ledge." The whole creation is the work of his hands, and every part of it exhibits to our admiring eyes wonders of skill and contrivance, which bespeak the infinite understanding of their Maker. Behold also his unspotted purity and holiness: "He knew no sin;" there was none in his nature; none in his practice. His keen-eyed enemies could find no blemish in his character; for he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Behold his goodness; he was all goodness,—goodness incarnate. "He went about doing good;" it was his object, his business, his delight, his constant employment. What kindness did he show to the poor and needy, the sick and sorrowful! He was touched with the feeling of human infirmities; and none ever applied to him for relief and were rejected. We admire and praise the charitable man, who feeds the hungry, and clothes the naked, and supplies the poor; but who, of all the sons of men, ever denied himself, as did the Lord of all? Rich he was, eternally and infinitely rich; but for our sakes he became poor,—a man so poor, that he had not a place where to lay his head; and this for the purpose of raising us from the dunghill, and setting us among princes. Admire his matchless Condescension, who left the bright abodes of bliss, and humbled himself to become a man, and dwelt for more than thirty years in this moral dungeon,—this sink of sin and pollution, where he "endured the contradiction of sinners against himself;" and where he must have daily been shocked, far more than was righteous Lot in Sodom, with the filthy deeds of the wicked; with the ignorance, the profaneness, the hypocrisy, and the hardness of heart of the Jews in that day.

Think of his ministerial labors; his travels on foot from village to village, and from town to town; exerting himself to be heard by congregations of many thousands at the temple, the sea-side, and on the mountains; and then exposed at midnight to the chilling air, while engaged in devotional exercises.

Above all,—follow him from the guest-chamber, where he kept the last passover with his disciples, instituted the sacramental supper, and poured forth the friendship of his heart in affectionate advice and fervent prayer;—follow him to the lonely garden, often the scene of his sacred retirement; and behold him prostrate on the cold ground, enduring an agony of soul which no words can describe, which no heart can fully conceive; and which forced from his suffering soul, long used to sor-

row and grief, but not to complain, the mysterious cry,—“Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!”

While yet covered with the blood pressed from every pore, by the insufferable agony of his spirit, behold him surrounded by a band of ruffians, headed by the traitor, one of his own family,—seized, bound, hurried to the unjust tribunal, crowned with thorns, severely scourged, falsely accused, unjustly condemned, barbarously insulted, and at length, nailed to the cross, lifted up, and for hours suspended by his wounded hands, a spectacle to angels and to men! Behold, how he loved us!

“O for this love! let rocks and hills
Their lasting silence break!
And all harmonious human tongues
The Savior's praises speak!”

But this is not all. Behold “the lamb in the midst of the throne!” Highly exalted as he is,—“King of kings, and Lord of lords,” ‘he has taken a man’s heart with him to Heaven!’ he is still the brother of our nature, “flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone!”

“And in his measure feels afresh
What every member bears.”

And now stop, and think; and say,—Is he not a proper object of our love! Does he not deserve your highest esteem,—your most cordial affection? Is he not “altogether lovely? Yes; and let us join the beloved disciple, and say with him, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,—unto him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

We now proceed to the last head of our discourse, and say, that

Jesus Christ is the object of a believer's joy—“in whom ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.”

Joy is a passion produced by love; it is the triumph of pleasure in the possession, or in the anticipation, of some promised good. This joy arises both from a salvation already in part received, and a salvation ready to be revealed, and to be perfectly possessed hereafter.

What excites the passion of joy among the *children* of men? Inquire; and you will find something like it, but much superior to it, in the salvation of which we speak.

A man is just delivered from extreme and imminent danger. The ship in which he sailed was wrecked, and driven to pieces on the shore; but he escaped the threatening destruction, and is landed in safety, beyond the reach of harm. Another was asleep in his house, which was all in flames. He is alarmed; death, in the most horrible

form, threatens him with instant ruin ; but happily he reaches a window, and safely descends into the street. He is saved. O what joy possesses his soul !

A criminal is arraigned, and charged with a capital offence. The witnesses give evidence against him. He trembles for the result. The jury retire to consider their verdict, they return to deliver it. All is attention ; every eye is fixed on the foreman ; and no eye so anxious as that of the prisoner. The welcome sound,—“Not guilty,” salutes his ear.—Ah ! who can describe his joy ?

Another prisoner is declared to be guilty. He is shut up in his lonely cell ; the death-warrant is signed, and the fatal morning approaches. It is come. The officers of justice arrive ; and the dreadful sentence is about to be executed. But, just at the awful moment, an unexpected buzz is heard ; the agitation increases ; and lo ! “a pardon ! a pardon !” is announced.—Ah ! who can conceive of the prisoner’s joy !

A wretched captive is taken in war, or seized by lawless pirates. He is shut up in a loathsome dungeon, where, for many a long year, he drags on a tiresome existence. He scarcely dares to hope for deliverance. But through the kind providence of God, some friendly heart has found means to procure his ransom. It is paid, and the captive is set free. Ah ! who can tell what are his grateful and joyful feelings !

Or, to recur to a case more common and familiar. Let us state it in the words of inspiration. “Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted ; their soul abhorreth all manner of meat ; and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble ; and he saveth them out of their distresses. He sent his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction. How great is their joy on the return of ease, and health, and appetite, and strength and pleasure !

These are the joys of men, even of “men of the world, whose portion is in this life.” Far greater, surely, are the joys of the redeemed. They are delivered from going down to the pit ; they are as brands plucked out of the fire ; they are justified, freely, and fully, by the imputation of Christ’s righteousness unto them : and blessed indeed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered ! and to whom “the Lord imputeth not iniquity !” Jesus Christ has preached

deliverance to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who were bound. The great Physician has healed all their diseases, and soon will he introduce them into that healthier clime, where no inhabitant shall say, I am sick.

“These are the joys that satisfy,
And sanctify the mind.”

These are the joys which are called “unspeakable, and full of glory.” No words can describe them ; no language can express them ; they are too great, too glorious to admit of description ; they are infinite, because they are eternal. Therefore are they “full of glory.”—They relate to the future and everlasting state of complete purity, exaltation, and bliss. Indeed, “it doth not yet appear what we shall be ;” but it is our joy to know that we shall be near and like our Savior.

CONCLUSION.

WE have been contemplating a summary of real Christianity ; including Faith, and Hope, and Joy. In these, unquestionably, true and genuine religion consists : and if so, it becomes every one to inquire,—Have I this *Faith* ? Have I this *Hope* ? Have I this *Joy* ? Jesus, it is true, is yet unseen ; but the true Christian may say, “I rely upon him alone for salvation. I do not see him ; but in my esteem he is altogether lovely. He is my beloved, and he is my friend. I do not see him, but I rejoice in him ; and God forbid that I should glory in any thing but him.” Thrice happy is the man who thus can, sincerely, speak !

What has been said may serve to recommend religion, and counteract the prejudices of a carnal world. They tell us that religion is, at best, but a gloomy business, and strongly tends, if deeply imbibed, to destroy the pleasures of life, and lead to melancholy. But how can this be, when I find “that the kingdom of Heaven,” into which I wish to press, is “Righteousness, Peace, and Joy, in the Holy Ghost !”—when I learn, from this text, that the Christian is one who believes, and loves, and rejoices ! I will believe the Scriptures, and the people of God, and my own experience. I will not believe the world.

The world has its joys,—such as they are. I envy them not : they are polluted ; they are transient ; they end in sorrow. But the joys of religion are substantial, and permanent ; they are such as were

promised by the prophet Isaiah, when he foretold the blessings of the Messiah's reign, Isa. xii. 1—4: "In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."

And may I not reason thus? If an *unseen Savior* be thus an object and source of unutterable joy, what will that Savior be when he shall be seen! He will not always be unseen. Even now, by Faith we see; but it is "through a glass, darkly." We can see the Sun of Righteousness only as we see the natural sun when we observe an eclipse, through a colored and darkened medium: our present views of Christ are weak, and transient, and partial, and imperfect; but hereafter, when delivered from the burden of the flesh, they shall be real, substantial, immediate, direct. We could not now endure such a flood of light and glory as overwhelmed the disciples on Tabor, or John in Patmos; but our spirits shall be strengthened, and freed from all the clouds that obscure them; and our mortal bodies too, having put on immortality, shall clearly behold "the Lamb in the midst of the throne:" and then shall be fulfilled the saying that is written;—"As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." Amen and Amen!

HYMN.

MINE inward joys, suppress'd too long,
Extatic, burst into a song;
From Christ, though now unseen, they rise
And reach his throne beyond the skies.

His glories strike the wond'ring sight
Of all the first-born sons of light;
Beyond the Seraphim they shine,
Unrival'd all, and all divine.

Yet mortal worms his friendship boast,
And make his saving name their trust.
Jesus, my Lord, I know him well;
He rescu'd me from Death and Hell.

This sinful heart from God estrang'd,
His new-creating pow'r hath chang'd;
And, mingling with each secret thought,
Maintains the work which first it wrought.

He gives to see his father's face;
He gives my soul to thrive in grace;
And brings the views of glory down,
The beamings of my heav'nly crown.

Thus entertain'd, while here below,
Unspeakable my transports grow;
New joys in swift succession roll,
And glory fills my silent soul!

DODDRIDGE.

PRAYER.—BLESSED Redeemer, thou art the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. Thou art, at present, invisible to mortal eyes; but, by the eye of Faith, we see in thy word, we believe, and love, and rejoice. Thou hast pronounced a blessing on those who have not seen thee, and yet have believed;—may this blessing be ours! We desire also to love thee, —to love thee sincerely,—to love thee supremely. O shed abroad thy love in our hearts, and that shall kindle ours!—and may we, if happily delivered from death and danger, rejoice always in thee, our gracious Deliverer, with the joy which is unspeakable and full of glory!—and may the blessed period arrive, when we shall see thee,—see thee as thou art,—no longer through a glass darkly, but face to face, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Amen.

SERMON XCIX.

SIN ODISIOUS TO GOD.

Jeremiah xlv. 4. Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate.

THIS is part of a message sent from Jehovah, by his servant, the prophet Jeremiah, to a party of the Jews who retired to Egypt, when their brethren of Judah were led captive to Babylon. God here reminds them of the reproofs he had given their nation, and of the punishments he had inflicted for its sins.—"I sent unto you (saith he) all my servants, the prophets, rising early and sending them;" and the substance of his messages by them was, "Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate."

"The abominable thing" here referred to was, doubtless, their idolatry; they had "provoked him to anger, by burning incense to other gods," and by "pouring out drink-offerings to the queen of heaven" (verses 8, 17, &c.) This sin was peculiarly hateful to God, for it robbed him of his glory as the only proper object of his worship; it was a breach of his most positive commandments; and it was exceedingly criminal in *them*, for they were favored above all nations with the knowledge of his nature and will; they were his appointed "witnesses," to testify to the world the unity of God; and this breach of their trust led them into undue connexions with the heathen world, from which he had separated them, and induced them to commit many atrocious crimes in-

separable from the worship of idols. And their history shows how God resented this their conduct. Neighboring nations were let loose upon them for their punishment; and sometimes they were carried captive by their enemies; the ten tribes who were the most idolatrous, were irrecoverably dispersed; and Judah herself was now captive in Babylon. God, therefore, here exhorts them, by his servant Jeremiah, to abstain from this provoking practice. "Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate."

But though this charge related originally to the idolatry of Judah, it is properly applicable to sin in general, and to every sin in particular:—and, O that every one of us may consider the text as a message from God to himself, and particularly with relation to any "easy besetting sin," of which he is conscious! And with this view, let us notice three things contained in the words!

I. Sin is an abominable thing.

II. God hates it.

III. He requires us to avoid it. "Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate."

I. With regard to the real nature and evil of sin. We must form our opinion of it, not from the world, but from God. If we consult the world, in which "sin abounds," we shall find that "fools make a mock at it;" they treat it as a trifle, which need not give them any uneasiness: there are some who are properly "workers of iniquity;" it is their trade, yea, their food, their element, their delight; they "cannot cease from sin:" and some go further still; they plead for it: they promote it in others, and "glory in their shame."

But, whatever mistaken men, who are deceived and enslaved by the Destroyer, may think of sin, we are sure that our holy God, who cannot be deceived, and will not deceive us, accounts it an abominable thing, and hates it with a perfect hatred. And how can it be otherwise? for it is exactly the reverse of all that he is, all that he approves, and all that he requires. He gave us our being; he gave us all the powers of body and mind which we possess. He gave us this earth on which we dwell; and he has filled it with his goodness. "He gives us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, and fills our hearts with food and gladness." And all that he requires, and most reasonably requires, by way of return, is that we love him supremely, and that we love our neighbor as we wish he should love us. And is not this most reasonable? Who can object to such a demand? But *does* man thus love

his God, or his neighbor? Ah! no. The contrary is the fact. The hearts of men are by nature alienated from God, and their carnal minds are enmity against him. This will appear if you take a glance at the holy law, as it is summarily contained in the Ten Commandments.

The first commandment requires us to know and acknowledge Jehovah to be the only living and true God, and to worship and glorify him accordingly. But alas! how have vain men formed, in their corrupt imagination, "lords many and gods many!" they have multiplied deities, male and female, to the number of many thousands! and thus they have given that glory to idols which is due to him alone!

The second commandment forbids the worship of God by images: but how fruitful have been the corrupt imaginations of men, in "changing the incorruptible glory of God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, and creeping things!—offences so hateful to God, that he gave up these idolaters to the basest lusts of their own hearts. Rom. i.

How abominable to God is the profane, or even trifling, use of his most holy name!—a crime which though overlooked by men and magistrates, is such that the Majesty of Heaven, so affronted, will not hold the offender guiltless, but will punish him as his iniquity deserves.

God, in mercy to mankind, has appointed one day in seven to be sacred to religion and to rest. But ungrateful man refuses this heavenly boon; and while he robs God of his glory, in refusing obedience and worship, robs himself of the inestimable benefits he might enjoy.

God notices and hates the undutifulness and disobedience of children to their parents, while he gives a gracious promise to those who honor their father and mother.

How provoking to the Father of mercies is the crime of murder! When the first murder was committed, "thy brother's blood (said God unto Cain) crieth to me from the earth;" it cried for vengeance; and the decision of justice is, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."

God has marked with peculiar infamy the sins of adultery and fornication; they are stamp'd with the name of "unclean-ness," as being in a peculiar manner contrary to that holiness which he requires of his creatures;—and let such offenders tremble when they read that "whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."

Heb. xiii. 4. Yea, so infamous are these vices in his sight, that they must not even be named among saints. Eph. v. 4, 5.

Dishonesty, in all its forms, is offensive to the God of truth and equity. Not only open thieves, as housebreakers and highwaymen, are obnoxious to him, but all injustice between buyers and sellers; frauds committed in the price, weight, and measure of goods; all the arts of deception practised in trade; the dishonesty and negligence of servants, the contracting of debts without the prospect of payment;—in short, every transaction between man and man, contrary to that golden rule of action, “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even that to them.”

Perjury is a sin of dreadful magnitude. Woe be to the man that feareth not an oath, or dare appeal to God for a lie; and all slander, malice, and wanton injury of the character of others, is an abomination in his view.

Covetousness he deems idolatry; for the (inordinate) love of money is the root of all evil; and as it is a secret sin, a sin of the heart, to which God alone may be witness,—it is an evil which, above all others, detects the true nature of sin. St. Paul says of himself, “he had not known lust (concupiscence, or sinful desire) unless the law had said “Thou shalt not covet.” Rom. vii. 7.

Thus have we seen, by a glance at the Ten Commandments, that sin is an abominable thing: the law proves it to be such, and his holy word calls it by names intended to express *his* abhorrence of it; and to excite *ours*,—it is “filthiness,” “poison,” and the “vomit of a dog.”

It is almost needless to prove, as we proposed, in the second place, that

GOD HATES SIN. “Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate;” for, had he not hated it, he would not have prohibited it in his law, upon pain of death.

It must needs be hateful to him, for it has spoiled his work, especially the masterpiece of his work upon earth, his creature Man, originally formed in his own holy image. Ah, how is that image defaced! how is that glorious creature degraded! Where now is his image? It is lost, it is gone; and the sinner, given up to the base lusts of his mind and his body, bears the horrible likeness of the Devil and the brute combined; his wicked tempers resembling the former; his sordid appetites resembling the latter.

God’s holy word is full of expressions of his just resentment:—“God is angry

with the wicked every day.”—“The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.” “Thou hatest all workers of iniquity.”

Hence also the dreadful threatenings which we find in his word: “The wages of sin is death:” “The wicked shall be turned into Hell:”—“Say ye to the wicked, It shall be ill with him; for he shall eat of the fruit of his ways:”—“He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption.”

And as the threatenings of God, in his word, denote his anger, so his proceedings in the world discover it too. What induced him to hurl from their high abodes in bliss, the myriads of angelic spirits, now enchained in darkness? Doubtless, it was their hateful sin against him. And what led him to expel from the Garden of Happiness the man whom he placed there to dress and to keep it? We know that it was his sinful disobedience. For the same cause, he who made the earth, “cursed it for man’s sake;” doomed him to severe toil; and the woman to painful travail. Hatred to sin “broke up all the fountains of the great deep, and opened all the windows (or floodgates) of heaven;” deluged the whole face of the earth, and drowned the human race. It was God’s just hatred to sin that led him to “rain upon Sodom, and upon Gomorrah, brimstone and fire from the Lord out of Heaven: to the same cause we owe all the dire diseases that invade the human frame, and render the earth one huge hospital: it is this that depopulates the globe thrice in a century, and fills the graves with unnumbered inhabitants; “for dust we are, and to dust must we return.” Nor is this all; there is a second death,—there is a dreadful Hell for the reception and punishment of the wicked, where “their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.” To this horrible place He who hates sin will consign all finally impenitent and unbelieving sinners; saying, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels.” And, now, is any thing more necessary to prove that God hates sin? One greater proof yet remains; it is this, the great, holy, and just Jehovah saw fit, in the exercise of his mercy towards men, to punish sin in the person of his innocent Son; “for what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh,” God hath been pleased to perform in a different manner: “he has sent his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh,” even

in the human nature of Jesus Christ his only-begotten Son; and this for his gracious purpose, "That the righteousness of God might be fulfilled *in* (or rather *for*) us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Rom. viii. 3, 4.

We have shown, 1, That sin is an abominable thing: and, 2, That God hates it: We now proceed to the last part of the subject, which is,

Thirdly, *God calls upon us to avoid sin.* "Oh! do not this abominable thing which I hate."

This, you see, was the substance of all his messages to Israel by the prophets:—"rising early, and sending them," alluding to the practice of men, who having business of great importance to transact, rise early to set about it, that no time may be lost; so God, earnest to prevent the destruction of men by their sins, sent his servants betimes to give them warning.

This is the language of the Ten Commandments; most of which, it is observable, are in the negative form; as do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness; and they are put in this form, because fallen man is disposed by nature to do that which is evil; he must, therefore, be warned against that evil to which he is prone. "Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate." Let us remember and treasure up in our minds the word of God for this very purpose: thus David did. "Thy word (says he) have I hid in my heart, that I may not sin against thee:" and again, "How shall a young man cleanse his way?"—the answer is, "By taking heed thereunto, according to thy word:" and this proved successful; for he says again, "By the words of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the Destroyer."

Observe also the heavenly discourse of our Savior upon the mount! What divine morality is inculcated in that inimitable sermon! What a spiritual exposition does the King of Zion give of his holy law, to deter men from sin, and cause them to resemble their Father who is in Heaven! In like manner the holy apostles, in their discourses and in the epistles, discourage every vice, and insist upon the sanctity of character which becomes Christians; saying, "Let every one who nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

The histories contained in the word of God have the same holy tendency. Do we read the histories of good men? "Let us be followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises." Do we peruse the histories of bad men, and of their sore punishment?—"these things

are written for our warning,"—"these things happened unto them for examples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." 1 Cor. x. 6—11.

The threatening which we find in the word of God have the same benevolent intention. "Son of man (said God to the prophet Ezekiel) I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me; when I say to the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity;—but his blood will I require at thy hand." Ezek. iii. 17. The language of all the threatenings is,—"*Do not this abominable thing.*" "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

And do not all the various blessings we receive from the hand of God come to us with the same message? Does he not do us good, giving us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness? does not he visit the earth, and water it? clothe the pastures with flocks? cover the valleys with corn, and crown the year with his goodness? and doth not this goodness cry with a gentle yet powerful voice,—"*Oh! do not this abominable thing that I hate!*" And surely, if we will not hear that admonition, we shall hear him justly complain, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider!"

And further, What is the language of affliction? What mean the numerous trials and troubles of life? Are they not all the fruits of sin? do they not painfully convince us that sin is an evil and a bitter thing? And are they not intended for our profit, to introduce "the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and to make us partakers of his holiness?" Yes, every pain of body, and every pang of mind, says,—"*Do not this abominable thing that I hate!*"

In a word, Such is the uniform language of the whole Gospel of Christ. Is not this the doctrine of the Cross? Why did the innocent Son of God suffer, and bleed, and die? He did not sin, "neither was guile found in his mouth; yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and put him to grief; but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all." In this way the all-wise God was pleased to

exhibit to the whole world the just abhorrence of sin, by punishing it in the person of his Son, while he displays the riches of his grace in freely pardoning all who believe in him. Thus also he would furnish his people with the strongest possible motives to holiness, that they might hate the sin which murdered their Lord; and be constrained, by the force of love to him, to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, and to live unto him in holiness and righteousness of life all their days.

CONCLUSION.

AND is sin such an abominable thing?—then “how abominable and filthy is man, that drinketh in iniquity like water?” (Job xv. 16.)—who longs for it as the parched traveller for the refreshing stream, and to whom it is as delightful as cold water to a thirsty soul; for there are those (are we of that number?) who “commit iniquity with greediness; who take pleasure in unrighteousness; and who cannot cease from sin. Ah! how unlike are such men to God! and if only “the pure in heart shall see God,” where shall these lovers and workers of iniquity appear? Marvel not, then, if to such we address the solemn words of Christ,—“Ye must be born again.” “Verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John iii. 3, &c.)

This also shows how great and dangerous a mistake it is, to think lightly of sin, or to esteem it a trifle; or to do as (the Scripture says) “fools do,”—“make a mock at sin.” Ah! it is no trifle, unless the anger of an offended and Almighty God be a trifle, and unless everlasting punishment be a trifle. O let us learn to think and speak of sin as *He* does who cannot be deceived, and will not be mocked.

It will follow, then, that if sin be so abominable in the sight of God, and if he so hate it, that we also should hate it. So did Job, when his singular afflictions and instructions had accomplished their designed purpose; then did he exclaim—“I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes; and thus will it ever be found that penitent and pardoned sinners will “remember their own evil ways, and their doings that were not good, and lothe themselves in their own sight, for their iniquities, and for their abominations.” Exek. xxxvi. 31.

And this should lead us greatly to admire the love of God to such unlovely creatures as sinners are. His love must, indeed, be free, perfectly free, for there could be nothing in us to excite it: there

was enough to occasion his anger, and cause him to forsake us for ever; but while he held us in this low and lothesome state, “he passed by and beheld us, and said unto us *live!*” “for the time was a time of love!” (Ezek. xvi. 7.) Amazing love it was that said, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

Let all the world fall down, and know
That none but God such love could show.

Here, too, let us admire the efficacy of the blood of Christ. Let us, with St. Peter, call it “precious blood,” for precious indeed that blood must be which can perfectly cleanse from such horrid pollution, and make the believing sinner, plunged in that fountain, “whiter than snow.” Nor less admirable is the efficacious grace of the Holy Spirit, through whose renewing power we become new creatures; no longer “the slaves of sin,” but rendered “the servants of righteousness;” being “made free from sin, we are become servants to God, having our fruit unto holiness, and (expecting the blessed) end—“everlasting life.”

How strong, then, are the obligations under which we are laid to “abhor that which is evil, and cleave unto that which is good!” to “hate every false way, and the garment spotted with the flesh;” to avoid even the appearance of evil, and to abound in every good work, continually walking as under the eye of God, and as hearing him say to us,—“O! do not this abominable thing that I hate.”

PSALM LI.

LORD, I am vile, conceiv'd in sin,
And born unholy and unclean;
Sprung from the man whose guilty fall
Corrupts the race, and taints us all.

My lips with shame my sins confess
Against thy law, against thy grace,
Great God, thy nature hath no bound,
So let thy pard'ning love be found.

Behold, I fall before thy face,
My only refuge is thy grace;
No outward forms can make me clean;
The leprosy lies deep within.

Jesus, my God, thy blood alone
Hath power sufficient to atone;
Thy blood can make me white as snow;
No Jewish types could cleanse me so.

O may thy love inspire my tongue!
Salvation shall be all my song;
And all my powers shall join to bless
The Lord, my strength and righteousness.

WATTS.

PRAYER.—Most holy God, thy law, thy gospel, and thy providence, all proclaim thee to be holy; but we are unholy and sinful creatures. O how abominable and filthy is man, who drinketh in iniquity like water! Such a creature, O God, thou mightest justly abhor, banish, and punish; for thy holy word, and all thy dealings with men, prove that thou hatest the workers of iniquity, and art angry with the wicked every day. How merciful, therefore, are the warnings thou hast given us, thy gracious invitations and precious promises! all unite in saying to us, Do not this abominable thing which I hate. Lord, help us to hear thy voice, and obey it. Suffer us not to think sin a trifle; but may we hate it as thou hatest it, and *because* thou hatest it. May the blood of Christ cleanse us from our past offences; and may the Spirit of Christ dwell in us, to purify our hearts, and sanctify us wholly, that we may serve thee in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our lives; and, finally, after this life, attain eternal joy and felicity, through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Redeemer! Amen.

SERMON C.

GOD INCOMPREHENSIBLE.

Job xvi. Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?

THAT there is a God, is almost the universal belief of mankind. Perhaps there are few absolute Atheists. Our reason compels us to believe that every thing which we see had a maker—that it could not make itself; but who or what God is, has been the subject of numberless disputes among men. History tells us that one of the ancient heathen philosophers was asked by his prince,—“What is God?” He desired a day to think of it, before he gave an answer: that day passed; he then desired two days more: when the two days were passed, he desired four. The king then demanded to know what he meant by such repeated delays. He replied,—“Sire, the more I think of him, he appears to me still more unknown?” This was not a bad answer for a heathen: but we are not in his condition. God has made himself known to us by his word; yea, he has sent us his Son; and “he who was in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”

In the passage from which our text is taken, Zophar, a friend of Job, is very severe upon him, as if he had pretended to a perfect knowledge of God, and for which he reproves him. This charge, though not strictly true as to Job, implies a very great and instructive truth; namely, that

GOD IS INCOMPREHENSIBLE.

We do not mean to say that we can have *no* conceptions of his nature, but no adequate conceptions—not that we cannot “find him out” at all; but, as our text intimates, not “to perfection.” When we say, therefore, that God is incomprehensible, we must not infer that we need not search after God, or despair of finding him if we do; for indeed, the right knowledge of God is the sum of religion. We are commanded to “seek the Lord—to seek him while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near.” Isa. lv. 6. It is promised, that “we shall know, if we follow on to know the Lord.” Yea, it is the grand promise of the New Covenant—“They shall all know me, from the least unto the greatest;” and all thy children shall be taught of God.”

And yet, after all, it will be found true that “God is incomprehensible;” and the plain reason of this is, God is infinite; and we are finite; his glorious excellencies are without bounds; but our capacities are within narrow limits. A shell cannot contain the ocean; nor can the human mind comprehend the Almighty. And this will appear if you consider,—that,

I. We cannot perfectly understand his **WORKS**: though we see them with our eyes, and understand them in part, we cannot find them out to perfection. It is our duty to observe them, and study them. “The works of God are great? sought out by all them who have pleasure in them;” and we are directed to “magnify his works which we behold.” They are intended to preach their Maker; and they “so declare his glory,” that the heathen, who have no other instructor, will be left without excuse, if they glorify him not as God. (Ps. xix. and Rom. i. 21, &c.) But, though we may admire, we cannot comprehend his works. A little child may fancy he can touch the moon, or reach a star; but an adult person knows better, and is aware of their vast distance: so, if our minds are rightly informed, we shall perceive that the works of God are immensely great and glorious, as is finely expressed in the verse after our text:—“It is high as Heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than Hell, what canst thou know?” Of many of God’s works we know neither the nature nor the design. Who can tell the distance of the fixed stars, or who knows what is their use? Who can say for what purposes destructive animals and poisonous plants were formed? And where is the man who can explain the nature of the connexion between his own soul and his body? Surely then, if the

works of God are thus incomprehensible, their Maker must needs be so too.

II. The ways of God, in the course of his providence, are to us, frequently unsearchable. Truly does the Psalmist exclaim,—“How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!”—“Thy way, O God, is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known!” Or, as it is expressed in another place, “Clouds and darkness are round about him.” There is frequently, to our feeble minds, an obscurity in the Divine proceedings. The righteous are afflicted, while bad men prosper: the wicked govern, and the pious are oppressed: useful men are cut off by death; while cumberers of the ground grow old in sin. In all this, God is righteous; but his proceedings are, at present, incomprehensible.

III. The Word of God is not perfectly understood. Many parts of it, indeed, are perfectly plain. Every thing necessary to salvation is so easy, that “he who runneth may read;” yet there certainly are other things “hard to be understood;” “deep things of God;” “meat for strong men,” as well as “milk for babes.” There are, especially, prophecies yet unfulfilled, which to us are obscure, as probably those already accomplished were, formerly, to the church of God in ancient times. The word of God is an ocean, a vast abyss; which, with our feeble line, we cannot fathom; it is like its Divine Author, incomprehensible.

IV. But it is of God himself, in his glorious attributes, that we chiefly design to speak. Who by searching can find out God? who can fully conceive of his Divine Perfections?

Speak we of his *Eternity*? Who can comprehend it? How can we conceive of a Being, self-existent, independent, self-sufficient, who existed before a creature was made, who had no beginning—suffers no change—will have no end—one who was from all eternity—an eternity past—who will remain unchangeable through an eternity to come? We believe that men, that angels, that the world had a beginning, for God willed them to exist; every thing we are acquainted with, was made; but who can conceive of Self-Existence?

We ascribe to God infinite *Power*,—our text styles him “The Almighty;” but who can conceive of Power that has no limits? We perceive that the power of creatures is confined within narrow bounds. The powers of man are extremely limited; in some qualifications he sees

himself exceeded by surrounding animals; some have more strength, greater swiftness, keener scent than himself, though reason exalts him far above them, and enables him to avail himself of their superiority, for his own pleasure or profit; but after all, he finds himself weak and feeble, and, compared with the Almighty, a helpless worm. For “who can utter all his mighty acts?” and when we have stretched our thoughts to the utmost, in the contemplation of his greatness, we can only say with Job, (chap. xxvi. 14,) “Lo! these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him! but the thunder of his power, who can understand?”—Compared with the reality, all our conceptions of it are but as a few drops compared with the ocean, or a gentle whisper compared with a tremendous peal of thunder. How noble, how sublime are the scriptural descriptions of his omnipotence, in the prophet Isaiah!—“Who hath measured the waters (of the ocean) in the hollow of his hand, and meted out Heaven with the span, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance?”—“Behold!” said Elihu to Job, “God is mighty, he is mighty in strength and in wisdom:” and then he proceeds to produce various proofs of it in the dispensations of his providence. God himself then takes up the mighty theme, and refers to the marvellous work of Creation, and his dominion over it. The effect upon the mind of Job was wonderful, and he cries out,—“I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee! I have uttered what I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.” Thus he confesses that the Power of God is incomprehensible!

Again. We believe that God is possessed of infinite Wisdom and Knowledge. He perfectly knows all things that ever passed in the world, from the first day of creation; he knows all things that are now passing in all the countries of this globe, as well as in Heaven and in Hell too. He foreknows all things which shall hereafter come to pass, in all future generations, to the end of time. But here we are lost at once, and are obliged to cry, with the prophet, (Psalm cxxxix. 6,) when he had been considering the universal presence of God, “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.” We are conscious of our own ignorance; every day convinces us that we know next to nothing; men of the greatest talents, who have studied

books all their lives, and have attained far more knowledge than their plainer neighbors, will be the first to confess their ignorance, and allow that their knowledge is very contracted. Who then can conceive of a Being from whom nothing is hidden; who knows the hearts of men; who "knoweth our thoughts afar off;" who is perfectly acquainted with all that we call accidental, or contingent, and which it is impossible for the wisest men to foresee! We must readily own that the wisdom of God is incomprehensible to us; we can only stand on the shore of this vast and immeasurable ocean, and exclaim with St. Paul, "O! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" Rom. xi. 33.

We are constrained to speak in the same manner of the infinite HOLINESS, the infinite JUSTICE, and the infinite GOODNESS of God. All these are clearly revealed and beautifully displayed in the Gospel of our salvation; but who can comprehend them? Adoring angels, in their heavenly worship, veil their faces while they cry "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God Almighty!" We see no beings around us on earth, even of the most pious and good, who are perfectly holy; "there is not a just man upon earth, who doeth good and sinneth not;" how then can we conceive of Him who never did evil, who is "righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works?" "who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity?" We see no perfect justice in our world; the wicked often escape deserved punishment, and the pious are defrauded and oppressed; but God's throne is established in righteousness, and the Judge of all the earth always does right. The goodness of God is also unsearchable; the earth is full of his goodness; but who can comprehend it? God loved the world and gave us his Son; but who can say how much he loved us in bestowing such a gift?—it was an *unspeakable* gift! And, if we survey the wondrous Cross, and try to estimate the love that brought down the Savior from his throne to the cradle, and carried him through all the labors, and sorrows, and sufferings of his residence below, and fixed him at last on the cursed tree, we may try our skill, and endeavor to measure the dimensions of his love; we may, with all saints, examine its breadth, and its length, and its depth, and its height; but we must admit that, after all, it surpasseth knowledge. Ephes. iii. 18. Such being the fact—the *Works*, the *Ways*, the *Word*, the *Perfections* of

God being all incomprehensible, what are the practical lessons of instruction which we ought to learn from this acknowledged truth? These we shall now proceed to consider:

1. *We should learn to be humble.* It was for this purpose that the words of our text were spoken to Job: and Job *was* humbled, by the dispensations of God's providence, and especially by the display of his infinite greatness. At the conclusion of this book, we find this holy man thus expressing his contrite feelings: "I have heard of thee (he says to God) by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Before this great, glorious, incomprehensible Being, shall man be proud? No; rather let him say, "Lord, what is man that thou shouldest be mindful of him?" Shall man venture to boast of wisdom? Hear how he is reproved in this chapter, verse the 12th:—"Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt."—What do we know? Let a good man of ancient times answer. Prov. xxx. 2. "Surely, I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the Holy;" and let St. Paul reprove the boaster. (1 Cor. viii. 2.) "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."

And this should make religious people modest in their inquiries, and in their decisions, let them not be too curious, or too positive; dogmatical, or censorious. The men of Bethshemesh were punished for looking into the ark: and let us beware of being "wise above that which is written." "Secret things belong to God; but things revealed belong to us and to our children."

2. We may infer from hence, how base a thing is idolatry, or image worship! Is the great God incomprehensible, and shall we dare to make a likeness of him and pay it homage! "Doth he measure the waters in the hollow of his hand? Doth he mete out the heavens with a span? Doth he weigh the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Are all nations before him as a drop, as an atom, as nothing, as less than nothing, and vanity? To whom then will ye liken God, or to whom shall I be equal, saith the Lord?" O how dishonorable to God, and how disgraceful to man is it thus to "change the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and creeping things!" Rom. i. 23.

Even Pythagoras, a heathen philosopher, forbade his disciples to make an image of God—and shall any who call themselves Christians do it? God forbid!

3. Is God incomprehensibly glorious! then how should we admire and adore him! What high and honorable thoughts should we entertain of him! Let us also worship him with reverence and godly fear, for he “will be sanctified in all those who approach him;” and let us imitate him who, though he was called by the familiar name of “the Friend of God,” thus addressed the Majesty of Heaven:—“Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes!”

4. Let us calmly submit to all his dispensations in providence; they may sometimes seem to be obscure, and even severe; but they are always wise, and holy, and good. He doeth all things well. We may not be able to discover the reasons of his dealings with us; as a child is unable to judge of his father’s management of the family; as the subjects of a king may not always know the reasons of public measures, so we may be at a loss to conceive why the great and blessed God permits certain apparent evils to befall us; yet, let us bow to the sovereign disposal of Heaven, remembering that “what we know not now, we shall know hereafter.” If God himself be incomprehensible, is it any wonder that his proceedings should be so too? Our business is, not explanation or remonstrance, but submission; “Let the will of the Lord be done.” “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.”

5. Seeing that the nature of God is so wonderfully glorious, let us study to know him. We observed before, that his being incomprehensible is no reason why we should not labor to know him; if we cannot comprehend all his excellencies, for they are infinite, yet let us attain what we can. To this most useful pursuit the word of God invites us; therein we are told, that “this is eternal life, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent.” Wise men do not decline the study of any science, because of its sublimity or its difficulty. The astronomer applies himself to the study of the heavenly bodies, and labors to become acquainted with their magnitude, their distance, their revolutions, and, if possible, their uses; yet he does not expect to obtain a perfect and complete knowledge of them: and thus the physician, and the anatomist, and the botanist, pursue their several researches, while they yet remain far from

being perfect in their acquaintance with the objects of their studies. But let all our notions of God be regulated by his own word: it is only in “his light that we shall see light:” let us not presume to form our ideas of God by our own fancies, or the fancies of other men; we may sin by making *mental* as well as *material* images of God; as it was the fault with which God charged some of old—“they thought that God was altogether such as themselves;” but for this, he says, “I will reprove you.” And let us beware of abusing those familiar emblems and illustrations of his Divine glory, which he condescends to give us: as where he is said to be vexed, to be grieved, to repent; these expressions are “after the manner of men,” and intended to assist our feeble minds in their devout contemplations. In short, let us pray for divine instruction, and seek the aid of the Spirit of Truth; while, with holy reverence, we search for God in his written word, which is “able to make us wise unto salvation.” It is in the glass (the mirror) of the Gospel that we obtain the clearest and the mildest discoveries of God; there it is that “with open (unveiled) face, we behold his glory beaming in the face of his Son Jesus Christ;” for “he is the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his Person,” so that “he who hath seen the Son hath seen the Father also.” (John xiv. 9.)

Further, We may learn from hence the reasonableness of Faith. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen.” Now, “no man hath seen God at any time.” He is “the invisible God;” but the Savior “hath declared him;” he hath “manifested his name” to his people: what is revealed, therefore, let us receive by faith, and act accordingly. Thus “Moses endured, as seeing Him who is invisible;”—he had a clear and distinct view and apprehension of God, in his omnipresence, power, and faithfulness; and a fixed trust in him at all times, and on all occasions, as much as if he had seen God working with him and for him, with his bodily eyes:—thus also let us walk with God; and though we cannot comprehend him, let us admire, adore, love, and obey.

Finally, This view of the subject should render the heavenly state exceedingly desirable; for, in that state “we shall know, even as now we are known.” At present, we “see through a glass darkly,”—“obscurely,” or, as in “a riddle—a parable, a dark saying;—but in that holy world of light, face to face;” that is, clearly and

fully. "Now (said the highly-learned apostle of the Gentiles,) now we know in part, and we prophesy (or preach) in part; but when that which is perfect shall come, then that which is in part shall be done away." We shall see the objects themselves, of which we have now but the shadows or the figures; the pure in heart shall see God—God in our nature—Immanuel, *God with us*. The expectation of Job, and of every other believer, shall be gratified—"In my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself; and my eyes shall behold him, and not (as) a stranger." Job xix. 27.

Alas! what strangers are many, to all these thoughts of God! they do not wish to know him: the language of their hearts, and of their practice is, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways:"—but woe be to the sinner, if God should take him at his word; woe be to the man whom God forsakes: a time will come, when *his* favor shall appear to be infinitely more valuable than life itself; when life, deprived of his favor, shall be worse than death! O! sinner, if you possess one spark of reason; if you have the least degree of love to your own immortal soul, seek the Lord while yet he may be found; call upon him, in prayer, for mercy and grace, for as yet he is near; and those who ask shall receive; those who seek shall find.

Now, to this glorious and gracious, though incomprehensible God; to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the one great Supreme, be glory in all the churches, world without end! Amen.

HYMN.

CAN creatures to perfection find
Th' Eternal uncreated Mind!
Or can the largest stretch of thought
Measure and search his nature out!

'Tis high as heaven, 'tis deep as hell,
And what can mortals know or tell?
His glory spreads beyond the sky,
And all the shining worlds on high.

But man, vain man, would fain be wise,
Born like a wild young colt, he flies
Through all the follies of his mind,
And swells, and snuffs the empty wind.

God is a King of pow'r unknown,
Firm are the orders of his throne;
If he resolve, who dares oppose,
Or ask him why, or what he does?

He wounds the heart, and he makes whole;
He calms the tempest of the soul;
When he shuts up in long despair,
Who can remove the heavy bar?

He frowns, and darkness veils the moon;
The fainting sun grows dim at noon;

The pillars of heaven's starry roof
Tremble and start at his reproof.

These are a portion of his ways;
But who shall dare describe his face?
Who can endure his light? or stand
To hear the thunders of his hand?

WATTS.

PRAYER.—O THOU glorious Majesty of Heaven and of Earth, behold, we who are dust and ashes, have taken upon us to speak unto thee, the Creator and Possessor of the universe. We, finite and sinful mortals, cannot, by searching, find thee out unto perfection; thy works, which our eyes behold, are beyond our comprehension; thy works of providence are often mysterious and unsearchable; and there are depths of wisdom and knowledge in thy holy word, which we cannot fully understand; but O how incomprehensible are thy infinite perfections! thy wisdom, thy power, thy holiness, thy justice, thy truth, and thy goodness, are all beyond our conception! but we bow at thy footstool, we admire, adore, and love! Teach us, Holy Father, by thy Holy Spirit, in the use of thy word, to know thee and thy Son Jesus Christ more and more; teach us to do thy commandments with cheerfulness, and, to submit to thy rod with patience; and, by beholding thy glory in the person of Jesus Christ, may we be transformed into thy holy image!—and, at the appointed season, may we be received into thy presence, to behold thy face, and sing thy praise, for ever and ever! Amen.

SERMON CI.

THE GREAT HARVEST; OR, THE END OF THE WORLD.

Matthew xiii. 39. The harvest is the end of the world.

It has pleased God to establish a striking analogy (or likeness) between worldly things and spiritual things. Perhaps it is impossible for us, in our present embodied state, rightly to conceive of them without such a medium.

"The world's a system of theology."

Our Lord, however, in his own ministry, often made use of the common objects of sense, as emblems of those spiritual blessings which he came into the world to bestow on mankind. In this chapter we have several parables:—The sower,—the tares,—the net,—the mustard-seed,—the leaven,—the hidden treasure,—the pearl of great price: all intended to represent the different effects of the Gospel on the different hearers of it; and the mixture of true believers and of false professors in the church, till the great day of judgment, which is here compared to the harvest.

*[It was the custom of our blessed Savior to take occasion, from earthly things, to direct the minds of his people to heavenly things;—and we shall do well to imitate his example. Through his good providence we live to witness another Harvest. The season is returned in which the fields are stored with the foodful grain; when the husbandman feels himself rewarded for all his toil and expense; when the householder enjoys the prospect of an ample supply of bread for his family. “O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness! and for his wonderful works to the children of men!” But for that good providence, the corn might have been destroyed in the blade, or blasted in the ear; legions of hostile insects might have devoured it, or a deluge of rain might have laid it on the ground, a provision only for manure. Let us then acknowledge the goodness of God, and take care to “render unto him according to what we have received.” But, let us reap more than temporal blessings from the field, let us gather spiritual blessings also; let us extend our thoughts to that period;—that solemn, that joyful period referred to in our text.]

The text is part of our Lord’s own explanation of his parable of the tares and the wheat. “The kingdom of Heaven;” that is, the reign of God on earth by his Gospel, “is likened unto a man who sowed good seed in his field; but, while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat:” at length, behold, to the surprise of all, wheat and tares mingled together covered the whole field. The servant proposed to his master to weed out the tares; but as there would be danger of pulling up the wheat with the tares, the proprietor gave orders that they should be let alone; and then, at harvest time, the tares, a pernicious weed, (not what we call tares) should be bound up in bundles and be burnt; and the wheat, the valuable grain, carefully housed, ver. 24, &c.

The disciples of Christ, not exactly comprehending their master’s meaning in this parable, took the first opportunity, in private, of requesting its explanation. This he readily gave; for, “if any one lack wisdom,” and pray for it, it shall be granted. He thus explained it: “He that soweth the good seed is the Son of Man:” that is, Christ himself. “The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom;” that is sincere Christians: “but the

tares are the children of the wicked one:” the enemy that sowed them is the Devil: the harvest is the end of the world: and to the season of harvest, the end of the world may be justly compared, for it is an appointed, fixed, expected time; it is a separating time; and it is a joyful time.

The word “Harvest,” in Scripture, has various applications, which it may first be proper to notice. Sometimes, it signifies that favorable period in which the Gospel of Christ is received, as it always ought to be, with a ready and obedient mind.—When our Lord observed the great multitudes which pressed to hear him, in the cities and villages where he preached and healed, his heart was “moved with compassion; and he said to his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.” Matt. ix. 37. At another time, when he beheld the Samaritans of Sychar coming forth to hear him, he said, “Behold the (barley) fields, for they are white enough for harvest!” John iv. 35. His Joy in these pleasing appearances was like the joy experienced by us when we perceive the ripened corn. And do we not in this country (and at this time) behold such appearances? Have we not observed, for many years past, a far greater attention to the Gospel than formerly? Has not God multiplied the number of faithful preachers, and serious hearers? Yes, he has; and we bless his holy name. And are not the fields abroad ripening too? Has not the Lord of the harvest sent forth to the heathen lands many laborious Missionaries? and are not multitudes of Hindoos, Hottentots, Indians, Negroes, and others become the first fruits of a harvest far more abundant, yet to be expected?

Sometimes, the word “Harvest” is to be taken in a very different sense, and signifies those dreadful judgments of Heaven upon a sinful nation, in war, famine, or pestilence; by which vast multitudes are cut down like the stalks of corn in the field. Thus, in the book of Joel the prophet, the Lord, referring to war, saith, “Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe—multitudes! multitudes in the day of decision” (or of *threshing*.) Joel iii. 13. So, when the destruction of Babylon is predicted, Jerem. li. 33,—“the daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor; yet a little while and the time of her harvest shall come!” War is a dreadful calamity; it is one of the most terrible scourges with which the God of justice punishes a guilty nation for its wickedness; when a people have, by

* This sermon is intended for the season of harvest; but if it be read, publicly, at any other time of the year, this passage, included in brackets, may be omitted.

their vices, their irreligion, their unbelief, their persecutions, filled up the measure of their iniquities, as the Amorites did, and as the Jews did; then wrath, in the shape of the sword, comes upon them to the uttermost, and mows them down like grass or corn in the field. O! what desolations of this kind hath Europe for many years past beheld! and may Repentance and Reformation prevent the dire repetition of such a harvest!

But, in our text, "The Harvest" means that awful period in which the present state of things shall cease, emphatically called "the End of the world!"—*the End of the world!* observe the words. Awful words! the end of the world! Let us stop, and contemplate for a moment, what each of us must personally witness. These eyes shall behold the wonderful objects which that day shall present; these ears shall hear the tremendous trumpet which shall announce the event; these hearts shall flutter with joy, or tremble with terror at the decision, the final decision of our everlasting state, which shall then be pronounced.

What a humiliating expression is this,—*the End of the World!* And will this present world, with all its great and magnificent works, the improvements of ages, the labors of philosophers, and artists, and statesmen, and agriculturists, its libraries, castles, cathedrals, palaces, must all come to naught, must all be demolished, must all be consumed with fire? Yes, the decree is gone forth, and cannot be reversed; the day is fixed, and cannot be altered. O! "men of the world, whose portion is in this life," how tormenting is this truth to you!

An end? Yes, the end of all worldly possessions! "We brought nothing into this world" when we were born; and "it is certain we can carry nothing out of it" when we die; and, mark it, the end of every man's life is, *to him*, the end of the world. In vain the wealthy and prosperous man projects his schemes of future enjoyment: and says, "I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods; and I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." Foolish man! worldly man! Is this thy happiness, to eat and drink, and be merry? God forgotten! thy soul neglected! Salvation slighted!—But hear! the end, the end is at hand; "*this night* shall thy soul be required of thee!"

All worldly honors must come to an end. At present, distinctions of high and low,

rich and poor, are necessary; but they will come to an end. All the high-sounding titles of Lords, and Earls, and Dukes, and Princes shall be known no more; no distinction will then be valued but the distinction that grace made in the states and in the hearts of men.

"How lov'd, how valued, once, avails thee not,
To whom related, or by whom begot;
A heap of dust alone remains of thee,
'Tis all thou art, and all the *proud* shall be."

Then also will be an end to all the *means of grace*,—so we call those ordinances of religion, those opportunities we now enjoy of instruction by Sabbaths, Bibles, Sermons, and the conversation and example of pious persons around us. The throne of grace is now open; we may freely approach it, and obtain mercy and grace; but it will not be so always. No proclamation of pardon through the blood of the Lamb will ever more salute the sinner's ears; but it will be solemnly declared from Heaven, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he who is filthy, let him be filthy still."

We now proceed to the principal thing intended in this discourse, which is to show,—*why the end of the World is compared to the Harvest.*

1. The end of the world may be justly compared to a harvest, because,—*It is an appointed, fixed, ordained, and expected time.* The God of nature has wisely appointed the order and succession of the seasons. After the Deluge, when God promised no more to destroy the earth by water, he also engaged that, "while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, should not cease." The experience of more than four thousand years has convinced us of the faithfulness of God to this promise; and by the same authority, "it is appointed unto all men once to die, and after death the judgment;" death and judgment are as certainly fixed and appointed as seed-time and harvest are, and may as confidently be expected. Yes; "God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained. The seasons are rolling on; and when the spring hath passed, and we are far advanced in the summer, we know that the harvest is at hand; and it would be deemed very unreasonable to question its approach. Men, indeed, may labor to reason themselves out of the belief of what they dread, as the apostle Peter predicted that some would do, in the latter days of the world; the infidels he describes are "scof-

fers" at religion; men who "walk after their own lusts," despising the commandments of God; these men say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" for all things, say they, remain, age after age, the same; but the apostle reproves them, by reminding them that the world was once destroyed by water, "according to the word of God;" and "according to the same word," it shall finally be destroyed by fire. The season of harvest is fixed by the irreversible decree of God.

2. The end of the world may be compared to a harvest, *because it is a separating time*; and so it is expressed in the parable before us:—"The tares and the wheat grew *together* until harvest," but then the reapers are directed to "gather first the tares, and bind them in bundles, to burn them; but to gather the wheat into the barn." Jesus Christ, ver. 41, explains this, as signifying the separation which shall be made at the end of the world; "the angels shall gather out of his kingdom (his church) all things that offend, and them that do iniquity;" all who call themselves Christians (for others are outside of the hedge of the gospel-field) who by their wickedness are an offence and a scandal to their holy profession, who pervert and abuse the Gospel, by their dangerous errors, or gross immoralities, and thereby grieve and offend the ministers and friends of true religion. They shall be separated. Now they are mingled with sincere Christians in the same churches, in the same families, and for wise ends permitted by Christ to remain with them; spared, it may be, for the sake of their pious friends, or spared to assist the cause of God by external aid, as some of them do; but at the harvest, the separation shall take place; and O! what will be their fate! they shall be cast into a furnace of fire! there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth!—deep lamentation, anguish, and despair, aggravated by a recollection of the privileges they once enjoyed and abused, and the vain hope which, as professed disciples, mingled with the true ones, they once entertained.

On the other hand, how happy and glorious shall believers appear! "they shall shine forth as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father!"—they shall possess a glory and a radiancy like the sun itself, and be fixed for ever in the kingdom of their Father, to enjoy the transforming visions of his face! Then will God, by his angels, "gather together his saints," even they "who made a covenant with him by sacrifice,"—the sacrifice of Christ; by which,

through faith, they were reconciled to God. And then shall all the world "return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that served God, and him that served him not."

3. The end of the world may be compared to the Harvest, because it is a season of great joy: "the joy of harvest" is proverbial, and signifies a high degree of joy and satisfaction; and the joys of God's people are represented as the highest, because they are superior to those of the men of the world "in the time that their corn and their wine are increased."

But O, what tongue can describe, what heart can conceive of the joys and triumphs of that grand harvest of which we speak! The joy of the Savior himself,—the joy of angels,—the joy of ministers,—the joy of all the redeemed!

It will be a day of delight to the Lord Jesus Christ; for then shall be presented before his throne "a multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues; who, with a loud voice, shall say, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, for thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." Then, indeed, shall he behold, with inexpressible pleasure, "the travail of his soul, and be satisfied." From the day that he ascended in our nature to Heaven, he has seen and welcomed the purchase of his blood, one after another, admitted into glory: but then shall he behold them altogether; glorified both in body and soul, and they shall be "for ever with the Lord." This was "the joy set before him," which he never lost sight of in the days of his humiliation, for which he calmly endured the cross, and despised the shame. The prospect of this cheered his spirit, while a man of sorrows; when the Seventy reported the success of their mission, and when the Samaritans flocked to him for instruction, then he rejoiced in Spirit; but now he possesses "the fullness of joy, and pleasures for evermore."

The ANGELS also will exceedingly rejoice. They were ministering spirits to the Lord of glory when on earth: they gladly announced his birth; they ministered to him in the wilderness; they strengthened him in the garden; they attended his resurrection; and they accompanied him in his triumphal entrance into glory; and as they waited on the Head, so do they also upon the members of the body; they are "ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation;" and we are assured that they report with joy in heaven, the conversion of sinners upon earth. How great then will be their delight when they

shall behold their whole charge fully redeemed, and completely happy! having no farther occasion for their benevolent services, but exceeding grateful for having enjoyed them.

And will not the MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL share in the general joy of this delightful harvest? Who will be more joyful than they? Who can have more occasion for joy? Once they labored hard in their studies, in their pulpits, in their pastoral visits. The greater part of them were poor and despised for their Master's sake; and many fell victims to their labors and sufferings for the elect's sake. Yet, sometimes, perhaps, their hearts were cheered when an individual or two came forward, and praised God for what he had done by their instrumentality; but probably ministers are informed only of a very small part of the good they do; this information is reserved for the harvest-day, according to what St. Paul said to the Thessalonians: what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? What was it to be? "Are not even YE,"—ye, believing and converted people, whose sincerity was evinced by "your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope;"—"ye shall be our crown of rejoicing (or glorying) in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming." What though neither fame nor emolument rewarded the labors of the humble pastor or evangelist, it will be joy and recompense enough, when he is permitted "in the day of Christ," and "in the presence of Christ," to be permitted to present the fruit of his labors, saying, "Here am I, and the (spiritual) children which thou hast given me."

Finally. The joy of every saved sinner will be inexpressibly great. "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart." Joy is sown, and the crop is secured by the Almighty hand that sowed it. It may long lie buried in the earth; but let the believer wait patiently, as the husbandman doth; "we shall reap if we faint not;" and remember that it is written, "what a man soweth, that shall he also reap;" if we have "sown to the Spirit, we shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Now is the seed-time: the harvest will surely arrive. The Christian may "sow in tears," the tears of repentance; but "he shall reap in joy;" his repentance will not be repented of. Angels rejoiced to witness such a sowing; and the believer shall rejoice when he receives the fruits. His careful study of the word of God, his regular attendance

on the means of grace, the hours he devoted to closet-retirement, fasting and prayer; his bold profession of Christ before men; his rigid abstinence from sin and carnal pleasure, and his holy walk and conversation, despised by the world as needless precision, his generous support of the cause of Christ, and his compassion to the poor and needy, shall not fail of receiving a gracious recompense; his joy shall be great, for all his prayers are answered; all his fears are banished, all his hopes are realized, all the promises are fulfilled, and all his desires gratified to the utmost; yea, infinitely exceeded. "He rejoices before the Lord with the joy of harvest."

CONCLUSION.

1. LET us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Will this vain world soon come to an end? Then let us not set our hearts upon it. "Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is *not*," or which will soon cease to be; or, what is the same thing to thee, which thou must soon leave; it may be, to-morrow? O guard against the love of the world; the love of sin ruins many; the love of the world ruins far more; for, "if we love the world, the love of the Father is not in us." "Use the world, then," as not abusing it; "for the fashion of this world passeth away." "Let your moderation be known unto all men;—the Lord is at hand."

2. How important is the present moment! Remember, it is the sowing-time; and we sow for eternity. Let me ask you, What have *you* been sowing? Has it been to the flesh, or to the Spirit? *Young man!* how do you employ your leisure hours? Do you read your Bible? Do you pray? Do you observe the Sabbath, and hear the word of God? Do you watch and pray against temptation, and shun the places and persons and amusements which are dangerous? Remember,—“whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” *Busy tradesman!* you have many cares, and are “diligent in business;” but are you also “fervent in spirit, serving the Lord?” You have many cares; but remember Christ’s words,—“One thing is needful;” and, O! seek “that good part which shall never be taken away from you.” *Careful mother!* you too, like Martha, “are cumbered about much serving;” your little family engages, perhaps engrosses, all your cares and all your affections. You cannot forget your babe; take care that you do not forget your soul; you dare not

neglect your children; dare not neglect your salvation. And, O sinner! thou who livest in the practice of known iniquity, what crop do you expect from the seed you are sowing? Every seed produces its proper fruit; and so will thine.—What fruit may be expected from oaths and curses, from whoredom and adultery, from drunkenness and Sabbath-breaking? Conscience tells thee what. Ah! “the end of these things is death!” So long ago as the time of Job, this was the observation:—“Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity and sow wickedness, reap the same.”—“O turn from sin, and God will pardon you; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.”

3. Lastly. Here is much encouragement for serious and sincere Christians. You, blessed be God, have been enabled to “sow to the Spirit;” fear not then: “God is faithful, who hath promised.” The crop is secure, and the harvest is near. And then, O the joy of the expected harvest! We finish with the word of God “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious

seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”

PRAYER.—ETERNAL God, thou hast formed the Earth for thy glory; and, as it had a beginning, we believe that it will have an end. O prepare us for that awful period,—for that great harvest, when all the inhabitants of the world shall appear before thy dread tribunal!—then will the tares and the wheat, which grew together before, be finally separated. O that we may be found among true believers, at the right hand of the great Judge! Then may we rejoice to hear him say to us, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you.

O God have mercy upon the careless and the carnal, who are now sowing only to the flesh, and must, if thy grace prevent not, reap destruction and misery eternal! Awaken them, O God, to a just sense of their danger, that they may seek thee while thou mayest be found, obtain thy pardoning mercy, and grace to sanctify them in time to come!

We bless and praise thee, God, who causest the Earth to yield its increase, and produce food for our dying bodies! We rejoice with thankfulness in the annual harvest; but, O that our joy may be full, when, at the end of time, we, with all the faithful, shall be gathered into the heavenly world, to adore the riches of thy grace throughout the ages of eternity! Amen.

GENERAL PRAYERS.

PRAYER FOR A FAMILY, OR OTHER ASSEMBLY, ON A LORD'S DAY MORNING.

O GOD, who hast given us all our time, we thank thee that a seventh portion of it is devoted to thy special service. We welcome the return of the Holy Sabbath; we bless thee for the appointment of it; and we earnestly entreat thy blessing upon it. Help us, O Lord, by thy Spirit, to sanctify this day, and to keep it to thy honor and to our great advantage.

By resting this day from our worldly employments, may we be more and more weaned from the world, and prepared to leave it; and by conversing this day with heavenly things, may we be made more and more meet for the engagements and enjoyments of the heavenly world!

We desire to keep this day holy, to the honor of our great Creator, who, when he had finished the work of creation, sanctified this day of rest, in perpetual remembrance of it. We sanctify this day to the honor of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who, after he had finished the great work of our redemption, rose again from the

dead on the first day of the week, by which he was declared to be the Son of God with power, and by which we are begotten again to a lively hope. We sanctify this day also to the honor of the Holy Spirit, who in the first day of the week descended to bless the Church; and still abides with it to bless it. We implore his powerful grace this day to render every ordinance a blessing for our souls. By him may we be taught to pray, be assisted to praise, and enabled rightly to understand and receive the Gospel of truth! By him may the ministers of the word be powerfully aided in the work of the sanctuary; and may the Lord Jesus Christ be exalted higher and higher in all the churches!

Be present, O Lord, according to thy promise, with all thy worshipping people. Pity those who are detained by sickness, or other lawful hindrances; and pardon those whose carnal minds keep them from thy house.

Display, O God, the power of thy grace this day on the hearts of men! Convince the unconvinced, convert the unconverted,

instruct the ignorant, heal them that are of a contrite heart, and build up all believers in their most holy faith.

O that we may be in the Spirit on the Lord's Day! Make us joyful in thy house of prayer! Make this a high day to our souls,—a day of spiritual feasting and holy joy. Take us and ours into thy gracious protection. Bless and preserve us in our going out and coming in. Keep us all the day in thy fear; and at the conclusion of it, may we joyfully and thankfully say, A day in thy courts is better than a thousand!

Hear these our desires, O gracious Father, for thy mercy's sake, in Christ Jesus our Savior; to whom, with thyself and the Holy Spirit, we ascribe all might, majesty, and praise, for ever and ever! Amen.

PRAYER FOR A FAMILY, OR OTHER ASSEMBLY, ON A LORD'S DAY EVENING.

O ALMIGHTY and most merciful God, we desire with humble hearts to draw near to thy throne of Grace, in the name of Jesus Christ our great Mediator and Advocate.

We confess and lament before thee the corruption of our nature, and the many transgressions of our lives. We have indeed left undone the things which we ought to have done; and have done those things which we ought not to have done. We have thus made ourselves liable to thy dreadful anger and to everlasting punishment. O be pleased to give us true and deep repentance, that we may be sincerely sorry for our sins, and grieved that we should have acted so base and ungrateful a part against thee. O may thy goodness lead us to repentance!

We bless and praise thee, O God, that thou hast cast our lot in a Christian land, where we are favored with the means of Grace. We thank thee that we have enjoyed another Sabbath, and that we have once more heard the joyful sound of the Gospel. We rejoice to hear that there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared,—that thy dear Son came into the world to save sinners,—that he died the just for the unjust, to bring us back to thee,—and that his blood cleanseth from all sins.

O give us faith to believe thy holy word, to accept thy gracious invitations, and to rely upon thy precious promises;—for the sake of thy dear Son, pardon all our sins, and receive us graciously as thy children; and may thy Holy Spirit renew and sanctify our hearts!—May we sincerely hate

all sin, especially our easy-besetting sins!—let them no longer have dominion over us; but may our hearts be purified, our tempers sanctified; and may we become holy in all manner of conversation and godliness! May we each of us, in our several stations, adorn the doctrine of God our Savior; and may our light so shine before men, that they seeing our good works, may glorify our Father who is in Heaven.

Forgive, we beseech thee, O God, all the sins and imperfections which thou hast seen in our duties this day. Pardon the wanderings of our minds, the coldness of our hearts, and the forgetfulness of our memories. But let not all be in vain. Let our imperfect prayers be answered; let our unworthy praises be accepted; and let not thy holy word be altogether unprofitable; but, like good seed, sown in good ground, may it bring forth fruit to thy glory, and to our salvation.

(Here the short prayer, adapted to the sermon which has just been read, may be introduced.)

And grant, O Lord, that thy word, wherever it has been dispensed this day, may be made useful. O that thoughtless sinners may be awakened! the careless and secure alarmed! the convinced and humbled be comforted! the backslider restored! and all thy people refreshed and strengthened! Grant, O Lord, that none of thy ministers may labor in vain, or spend their strength for naught.

Remember, we pray thee, all our relations, friends, neighbors, and countrymen; especially all those who are afflicted in mind, body, or affairs. Give them patience under their sufferings, and in due time a happy deliverance out of all their troubles.

Be gracious, O Lord, to the government under which we live, and give wisdom and grace to all in authority; and that under them we may lead peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty.

And grant, we beseech thee, that when the days of our appointed time are finished, we may be supported in the hour of death, and be graciously admitted into thy presence, there to keep an everlasting Sabbath, to sing thy praise and enjoy thy glory for ever and ever. And this we beg for the sake of Jesus Christ, our only Mediator and Advocate.

(The Lord's Prayer may be added at pleasure.)

May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. Amen.

FOR A SUNDAY SCHOOL.

Morning Prayer for the Lord's Day.

To be used by the Master, Mistress, or one of the Teachers.

O LORD God Almighty, who hast safely brought us to the beginning of this thy holy day, we thank thee for thy merciful protection through the past night. As this is the day which thou hast made,—made for thy glory and for our good, be pleased to give us thy Holy Spirit, to help and bless us in all the duties of the day. May it be a true Sabbath, a day of rest from worldly labors and cares, a day of rest from sin, a day of rest in God.

Dispose, O Lord, all who are here present, to hear reverently thy holy word; and suffer them not to give way to carelessness of mind, or to hardness of heart and unbelief. Teach them also to apply the Scriptures to themselves. When they read of thy judgments, may they stand in awe of them; and when they read of thy promises in Christ Jesus, may their hearts be filled with gratitude! and may they take delight in singing thy praises!

And we pray thee, O Lord, to grant unto them the continual help of thy Holy Spirit, that they may be preserved from sin, and may become fruitful in every good work. May they be obedient to their parents and teachers; and may they be temperate, sober, and diligent; may no untruth proceed out of their lips, and may they learn both to command their tempers and restrain their tongues; and may they be kind and merciful to each other, forgiving one another, even as they hope that God, for Christ's sake, will forgive them.

And pardon, O Lord, all their sins, in time past, which either in thought, word, or deed, they have committed against thee. Receive, O Lord, all these children into the arms of thy mercy; and grant unto them true repentance, and an unfeigned faith in Christ their Lord.

We also beseech thee to prepare them for all those events which thy providence may see fit, at any time to bring upon them. Thou knowest the various trials to which they may be exposed, and the situations to which they may be called. We therefore pray thee to arm them for every trial, and to train them up in the performance of all those duties which thou shalt require of them. May they be grounded in the knowledge of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ: and may they now begin to fight, under the banner of their Savior, against the world, the flesh,

and the devil; and as they advance in life may they grow in grace, each of them striving to recommend that Gospel which they have been taught, by a holy life and conversation.

And, finally, we pray, that having thus done thy will, and enjoyed thy favor all the days of their lives, they may at length be received into those everlasting habitations which thou hast prepared for them that love thee, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Evening Prayer for the Lord's Day.

To be used by the Master, Mistress, or a Teacher.

O LORD God, our heavenly Father, we beseech thee to pour down thy blessing on us, and to grant that the words which we have this day heard with our outward ears, may, through thy grace, be so grafted inwardly in all our hearts, that they may bring forth in us the fruits of good living, to the praise and glory of thy name.

Forgive, O Lord, all the imperfections which thou hast seen in our services this day. Forgive also the various sins of our past lives:—may we repent of them with unfeigned sorrow! and may we lie down this night trusting in Jesus Christ our Lord!

We commit these children to thy watchful care, and to thy mercies in Jesus Christ. Defend them, we pray thee, O Lord, from all dangers, by night and by day; let thy blessing attend them to the end of their lives, and when their bodies shall be laid in the grave, do thou receive their souls into thine eternal kingdom.

We pray thee, O Lord, to give thy blessing to all their friends and relations; grant unto their parents grace to lead a Christian life, and to set a good example to their families, that so they, and the children whom thou hast given them, may meet together in Heaven. Bless the teachers of this school!—give them grace both to know their duty and to fulfil it.

We pray for the land in which we live, for the president of the United States and all in authority, and especially we pray for all the ministers of the Gospel; give success to their labors on this day. May their preaching be made effectual to the conversion of sinners, and to make them obedient to the will of God!

We would also make intercession for the poor, the sick, and the afflicted: for the widow and the fatherless, and for all those who have none to help them. O

Lord, bless unto them their earthly troubles, and turn them to their souls' good; and do thou protect and defend them, and appear for them when all human help fails!

We pray also for the whole rising generation:—may they be trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Put into the hearts of all parents and teachers a concern for the souls of those over whom thou hast set them, and give thy grace to the children of this land, that they may hear instruction with a teachable spirit, and may be made wise unto salvation.

And, finally, we pray thee to have mercy on all those who are now living in ignorance and sin, and are without God in the world. Turn them, O Lord, from their evil ways, give them true repentance, and send abroad the Gospel of Jesus Christ into all the world.

These prayers we offer up in the name of our only Lord and Savior; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, world without end! Amen.

May the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God our Savior! and may the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with us this night and for ever! Amen.

PRAYER FOR A SUNDAY-SCHOOL.

MOST holy and merciful God, we beseech thee, command thy blessing upon this institution; and mercifully grant that the children assembled before thee may not only learn to read thy word, but to understand and obey it; especially assist them by thy Holy Spirit, that they may truly believe in thee and in Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent; and that trusting in him alone for salvation and eternal life, they may be above all things desirous to glorify thy name on earth by a holy and righteous life, and to be fitted and prepared for that state of perfect holiness and happiness which thou hast promised to thy children.

Bless, we beseech thee, the means of

instruction here employed,—give wisdom and prudence to the teachers, and meekness and industry to the children; and make them duly sensible of the privileges they enjoy in this school, and desirous to improve them according to the wish of their patrons and benefactors.

Bless the parents and friends of these children; and may they at home second the instructions which they here receive, and not by wicked examples prevent their good effects; and may the parents as well as children have cause to bless thee for the advantages of this school.

[*When any are absent through Sickness.*]

Look in mercy upon any that may be confined by illness; sanctify the affliction to them, and if it please thee, restore them to us in health and peace.

[*When any scholars have lately died.*]

Grant, we beseech thee, that the breach thou hast made in our number by thine awful messenger, Death, may be sanctified to those spared, that they may see and consider that they are also exposed to the same; and may they be prepared, by thy Grace, to depart cheerfully and happily whenever thou shalt call them!

A GENERAL THANKSGIVING.

ALMIGHTY God, Father of all mercies, we, thine unworthy servants, do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving kindness to us, and to all men. We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but, above all, for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of Grace and for the hope of glory; and, we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful; and that we may show forth thy praise, not only with our lips but in our lives; by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, world without end! Amen.

THE END.





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